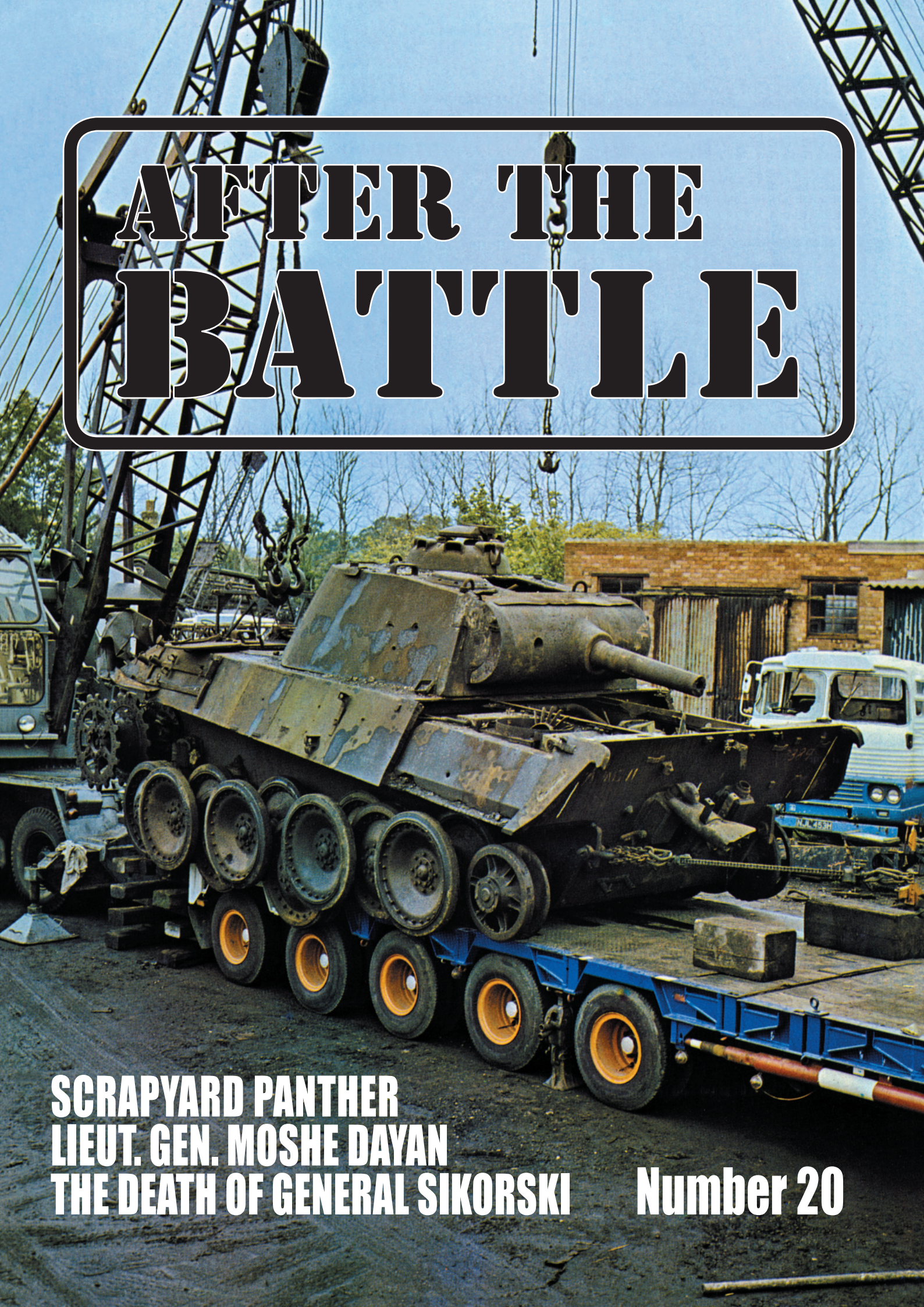

AFTER THE BATTLE

SCRAPYARD PANTHER
LIEUT. GEN. MOSHE DAYAN
THE DEATH OF GENERAL SIKORSKI

Number 20

NUMBER 20

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Front Cover: The Panther V Model G discovered in a South London scrapyard being loaded for transport to Germany, November 1977.

Centre Pages: The *After the Battle* Fairchild UC-61K Argus flying over Essex, March 1978.

Back Cover: The grave of General Sikorsky in the Polish War Cemetery at Newark, Nottinghamshire lies in front of the central cross — the inscription ZA WOLNOSC means 'For Freedom'.

Acknowledgments:

Two important reference sources for the preparation of the Death of General Sikorski are: *Accident* by David Irving published by William Kimber and *The Assassination of Winston Churchill* by Carlos Thompson published by Colin Smythe, Gerrards Cross.

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FAIRCHILD UC-61K 43-15025

The Fairchild Forwarder was the military version of the original Fairchild Model 24 light commercial monoplane introduced in 1934 by the Fairchild Engine and Airplane Manufacturing Corporation. Although the Forwarder was powered by either radial or in-line engines, the Model UC-61K, the tenth sub-type, was fitted with the Ranger L-440-7 six-cylinder inverted air-cooled motor. (The Forwarder when supplied to the RAF under lend-lease was renamed the Argus.)

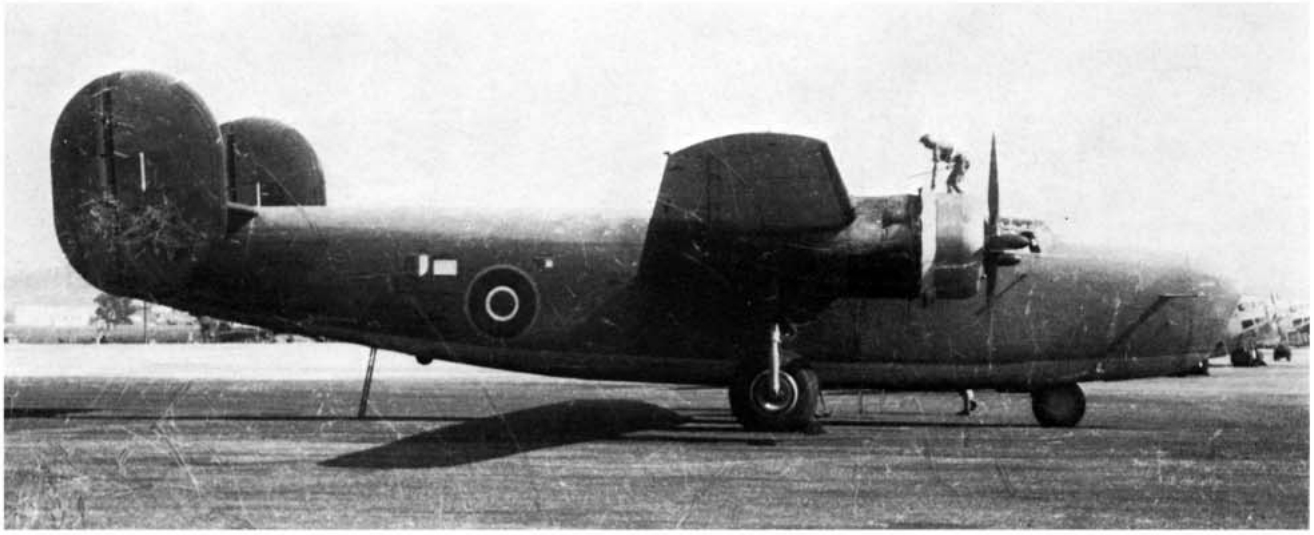
The aircraft illustrated was allocated the factory production number 989 and the United States Army Air Force serial number 43-15025. It was one of a production batch of 116 aircraft built to Contract No. AC-28355, dated November 28, 1942 and serialled from 43-14917 to 43-15032. The completed aircraft was rolled out of the Hagerstown, Maryland factory on Thursday, June 15, 1944 and undertook its acceptance flight four days later. A final inspection and acceptance took place on June 28, 1944 but three weeks elapsed before delivery to Baltimore on July 21. It apparently remained for some time in Baltimore before being shipped to the UK on August 21, 1944.

The next recorded date in the life of the aircraft is September 8, 1944 when an entry was made on its Record Card at the Air Ministry and it was allocated the Royal Air Force serial number HB751. Transferred to the Air Transport Auxilliary for communications and air taxi work, it served with that unit from September 21 until September 30, 1944 when it was sent to the repair works of Air Training Ltd. By October 28 it was ready for collection and returned to the Air Transport Auxilliary on November 7. Six days later, on November 13, it was relegated to No. 22 Maintenance Unit, Royal Air Force at Silloth where it was presumably kept in store. It appeared on a Census of Aircraft on March 21, 1946.

Being an aircraft which had been supplied under the Lend-Lease Act, the aircraft was officially returned to the United States Forces in Britain on July 18, 1947. Thereafter its history is rather obscure until 1957 when the aircraft surfaced in Switzerland registered as HB-AEC with the Cercle Aerophile at Bex. Three years later, it was sold and re-registered as D-EKEQ on March 28, 1960 in the German Civil Register to Stahldrachtwerke Adolf Hahn and Co. in Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Ten years later, on June 5, 1970, the registration was cancelled and a Certificate of Airworthiness for Export issued, the Argus having been sold to Aeroplan LM, at Gent, Belgium to whom it was registered as OO-EKE on June 30, 1970. The Belgian registration was cancelled on March 12, 1974, the aircraft being returned to the United Kingdom by A. V. Horsey Esq. of Shawdene/Newbury where it was allocated the British Civil Registration G-BCBL on March 19, 1974.

Purchased by the publishers of *After the Battle* magazine (Battle of Britain Prints International Ltd) in 1977, the aircraft has been rebuilt and restored in the authentic RAF wartime colours for training and communications aircraft by Cliff Lovell of Light Plane Services. It is intended that it will be displayed at the Imperial War Museum collection at Duxford Airfield, Cambridgeshire, and at various UK flying displays.



THE DEATH OF GENERAL SIKORSKI

Following the defeat of Poland and the division of her territory between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, General Wladyslaw Sikorski, the Polish ex-Prime Minister, together with his wife Helena and daughter (Madame Zofia Lesniowska) escaped to England where the General became the head of the Polish Government in exile.

Although when invaded in 1941 the Soviets renounced the Russo-German Pact against Poland, nevertheless their aspirations for Polish territory and unwillingness to release Polish POWs captured in 1939 became increasingly apparent. General Sikorski's unwavering and uncompromising stand against the policies of the Soviet Union, a country with which the British Government was co-operating against the common enemy had led, by 1942, to a growing rift with the London-based Polish Government.

Early in 1943, with Polish-Soviet relations at breaking point, Dr. Goebbels Ministry staged its most significant propaganda victory of the war when Berlin radio announced on April 13 the discovery in Katyn Forest near Smolensk of mass graves containing the bodies of ten thousand Polish officers. Although the German accusations that the mass killings had been carried out by Russian forces were denied by the Soviet authorities, it was against this background of open hostility with Moscow that the General decided to make a visit to inspect Polish forces in the Middle East.

On May 24, General Sikorski, in the company of his daughter, who was also Chief of the Polish Women's Auxiliary; the Polish Chief of Staff, Major-General Tadeusz Klimecki; the Chief of Operations Staff, Colonel Andrzej Marecki; his Naval ADC, Lieutenant Josef Ponikiewski; Mr. Adam Kulakowski, the General's personal Secretary and his British liaison officer, Colonel Victor Cazalet, MP., departed from Lyneham aerodrome near Bristol in a Liberator AL523. The pilot was Flight Lieutenant Edward Prchal (pronounced Pri-shal) of the Czechoslovakian Air Force. The Liberator staged through the airfield at Gibraltar en route to Cairo where it arrived safely on May 26. For the next six weeks, the party undertook a hectic tour around the Middle East visiting Polish troops under their commander, Lieutenant-General Wladyslaw Anders.

At the General's request, the same pilot and aircraft were provided for his return journey and, shortly after 5.00 a.m. on Saturday, July 3, the Polish party departed from Cairo West airfield. Apart from the six Poles and the British liaison officer there were three last minute passengers — Brigadier J. P. Whiteley, a Royal Artillery Staff Officer, also a Member of Parliament and two civilians, Walter H. Lock and Mr. Pinder, both believed to be Secret Service agents. Liberator AL523 was again piloted by Flight Lieutenant Prchal with Squadron Leader Wilfred Herring as co-pilot. Other members of the crew were Wireless Operator Louis Zalsberg acting as navigator, Sergeant Francis Kelly as flight engineer with Flight Sergeants George Gerry and Dobson Hunter as wireless operators/air gunners.

The party landed at Gibraltar at 6.37 p.m. on Saturday evening to be welcomed by the Governor, Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane and his staff together with the local Polish liaison officer, Lieutenant Ludwik Lubienski. The whole party, except for the three passengers who had boarded the aircraft at Cairo and the RAF crew, then drove to the Convent where overnight accommodation had been arranged.

From this point, events took first a comic and later a tragic turn as is described by the Governor's own account of what happened, written on July 18, 1945:

'The morning of the fateful day on which Sikorski met his tragic end dawned in an atmosphere of pure comedy. As has so often been the case, and probably without being itself aware of what it had done, the Foreign Office was responsible.

'General Sikorski, with several members of his staff, were staying with me in the Convent on their way back from the Middle East, and were not due to leave for England until late that night. They occupied all the guest accommodation in the house.

'In spite of the fact that Russia and Poland had broken off diplomatic relations, I received a message late on the previous evening telling

Top: **Liberator Mk II AL522 pictured on North Front airfield. This was an identical aircraft to AL523 in which General Sikorski died and was flown to Gibraltar after the accident to try to establish the reason for the crash (J. W. Buck).** *Above:* **In July 1977, thirty-four years later, Squadron Leader Harry Marks stands on the exact spot where Sikorski's Liberator was parked prior to take off.**

Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane Governor of Gibraltar (IWM).

Above: **Sunday, July 4, 1943, 2.45 p.m. General Wladyslaw Sikorski (correctly pronounced Wahdeeswav Shekorvski) followed by his Chief-of-Staff, Major-General Tadeusz Klimecki, in the garden of the Convent inspecting the Polish contingent (IWM).**
Below: **July 1977. Captain Anthony Barne, 15th/19th Hussars, ADC to the present Governor of Gibraltar (Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Grandy), stands in for Sikorski. Government House is still called the Convent.**

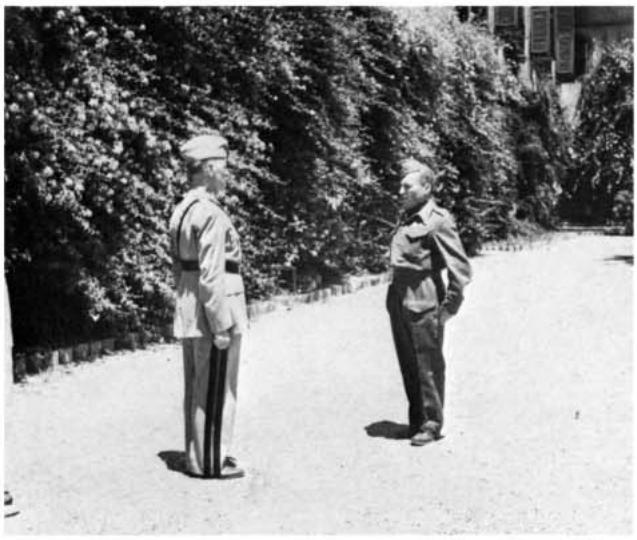
me that Mr. Ivan Maisky, the Russian Ambassador, would be arriving at Gibraltar by air in the early morning, on his way to Moscow, and asking me to extend to him my hospitality.

'In the normal course of events, Mr. Maisky's aircraft would not have left Gibraltar for Algiers until about 3.00 p.m. The difficulty of the situation was all too obvious and I did a quick think as to how to meet it!

'A certain amount of subterfuge was obviously necessary, and I arranged with my AOC that Maisky's aircraft should leave for Algiers at 11.00 a.m. on the grounds that bad weather was anticipated at Algiers later in the day. I then explained the whole situation to General Sikorski and asked him to arrange that he and all his party remained in bed until 11.00 a.m. I cleared out of my own set of rooms at the far end of the house and, after meeting Mr. Maisky at about 7.00 a.m. Sunday morning, installed him in these rooms and breakfasted with him there. During breakfast, a messenger arrived from the Air Force to say that Mr. Maisky would have to proceed on his voyage at eleven and, without any untoward incident occuring, I saw him off with considerable relief at that hour, returning to the house to find Sikorski and the Poles rising from their beds in considerable

Above: **General Sikorski salutes his troops. On the left in tropical uniform his Naval ADC, Lieutenant Josef Ponikiewski (IWM).**

Above: **Another ADC plays his part. The east wing of Government House is in the background.**



Above left: **The last picture in the series (Imperial War Museum No. GM 3461) taken by Sergeant Hutchinson of the General seen here speaking to Captain Borzemski, commander of the Polish detachment which was in transit to England from the Spanish internment camp at Mirandy.** *Above:* **The garden has now been laid out with grass lawn providing a quiet sanctuary in the centre of Gibraltar town.**

amusement. I heard later that when Maisky was told in Cairo that Sikorski had been killed taking off from Gibraltar late that night, his only comment was: "That is really most interesting. It explains why Macfarlane was in such a frightful hurry to get me off the Rock".'

General Sikorski's last day at Gibraltar was a busy one. By coincidence, during the night, a Polish courier, Bombadier Pulkownik Gralewski, had arrived on the Rock after a five-month arduous journey across Europe from Warsaw and, when the General had finished breakfast, he immediately took the opportunity to question the new arrival. When Sikorski perceived the importance of the information which Gralewski had brought from Poland, he offered him a seat in his Liberator, due to depart that evening for England.

Discussions with the Gibraltar-based Polish representative, Lieutenant Lubienski followed, during which time the General's liaison officer, Colonel Cazalet, played several games of squash with the Governor's military assistant, Major Anthony Quayle. At 1.00 p.m., the General inspected a guard of Honour of the Somerset Light Infantry drawn up in the garden of the Convent before attending an official luncheon with the Governor.

After lunch was over, General Sikorski, who also held the appointment of Commander-in-Chief of Polish Forces, returned to the garden to inspect 95 Polish soldiers who had arrived promptly at 2.45 p.m., to be addressed by their leader.

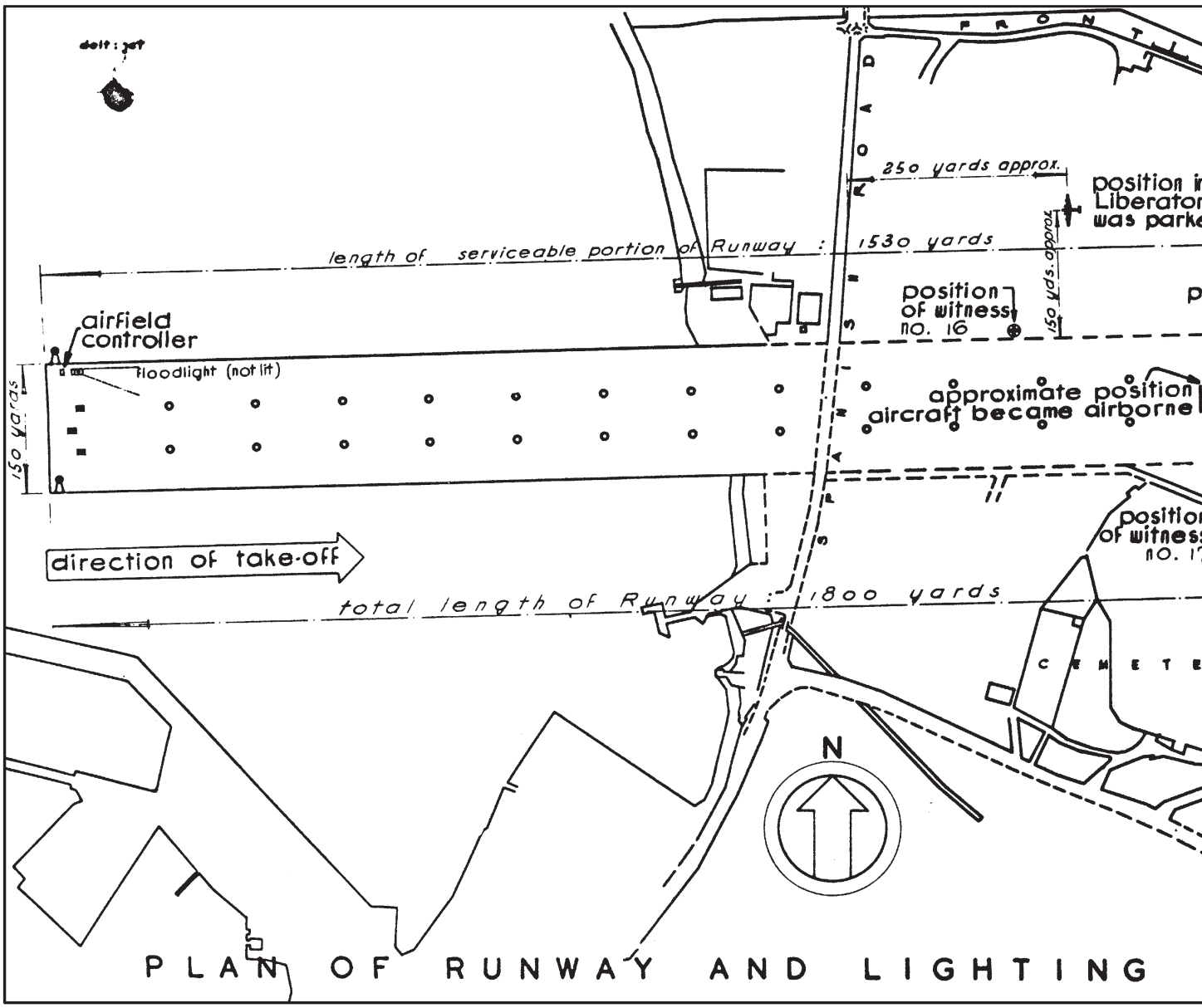
During the parade the last photographs of the General were taken by Sergeant Hutchinson. What was not photographed was a remarkable incident which occurred when the General asked one of the soldiers what it felt like to be wearing a Polish soldier's uniform again. One can imagine the horror of those present when the soldier retorted that he didn't care much for it as he was really a sailor and, even if he was allowed back to sea, he did not mind on which side he fought. The insolent soldier was immediately fallen out of the parade and stripped of his uniform.

Following this rather unhappy incident, the General and Lieutenant Ponikiewski, in the company of the British Minister for War, Sir James Grigg, who had fortuitously just arrived at Gibraltar, were taken on a tour of the tunnels by the Governor.

Returning to the Convent late afternoon, General Sikorski's next engagement was at 6.00 p.m. at a cocktail party in the Gibraltar Garrison Library Garden to commemorate the 167th Anniversary of the Independence of the USA. After two hours drinking, the party retired to the Convent in a convivial mood, where a pleasant dinner had been arranged.

The General addresses one of the Polish soldiers on parade — not the discourteous one who was later divested of his uniform (IWM).

The Gibraltar Garrison Library Garden — scene of the cocktail party.

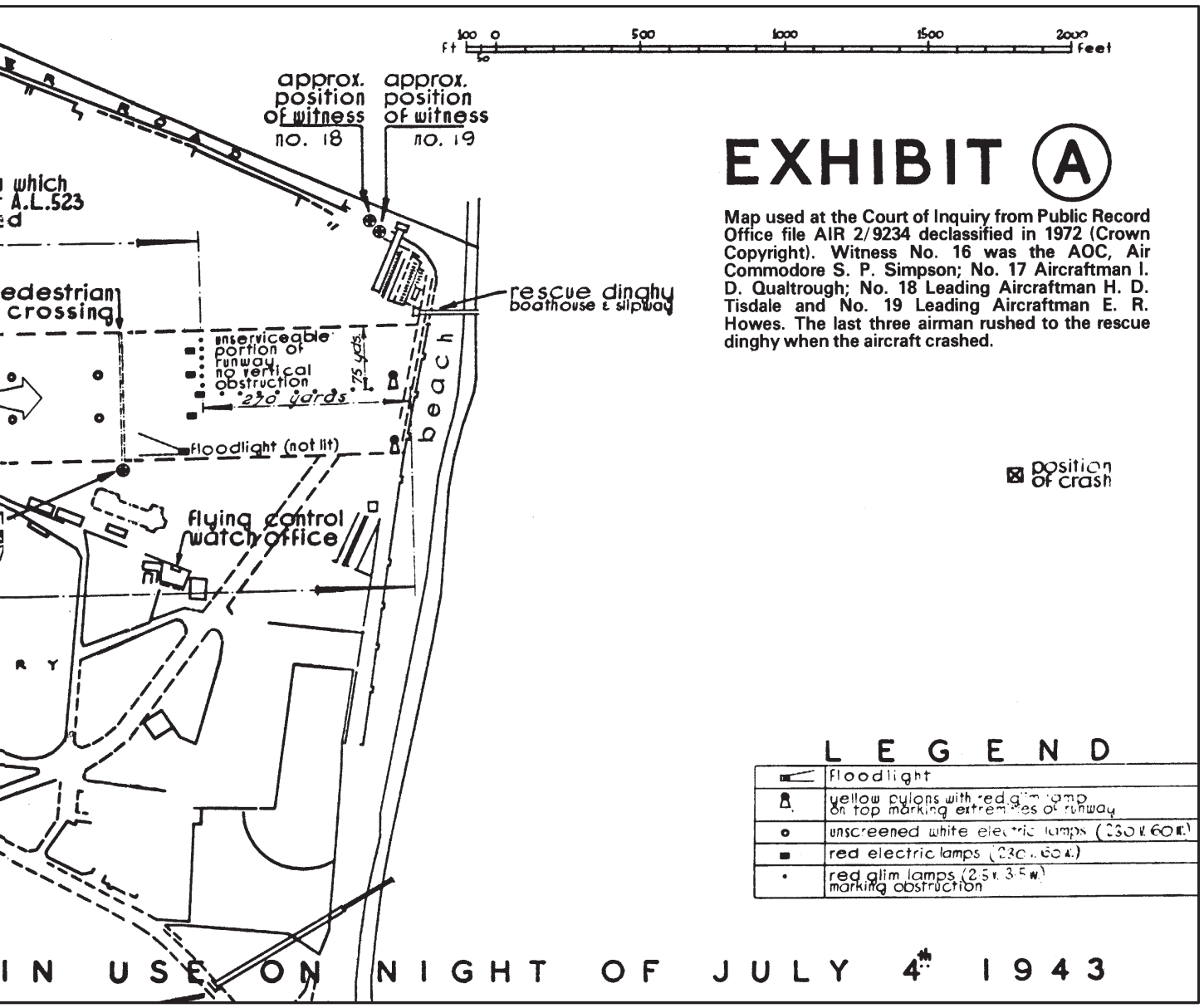

dolt : jet
250 yards approx.
position in Liberator was parke
length of serviceable portion of Runway : 1530 yards
150 yds. approx.
position of witness NO. 16
airfield controller
floodlight (not lit)
150 yards
approximate position aircraft became airborne
direction of take-off
total length of Runway : 1800 yards
N
PLAN OF RUNWAY AND LIGHTING

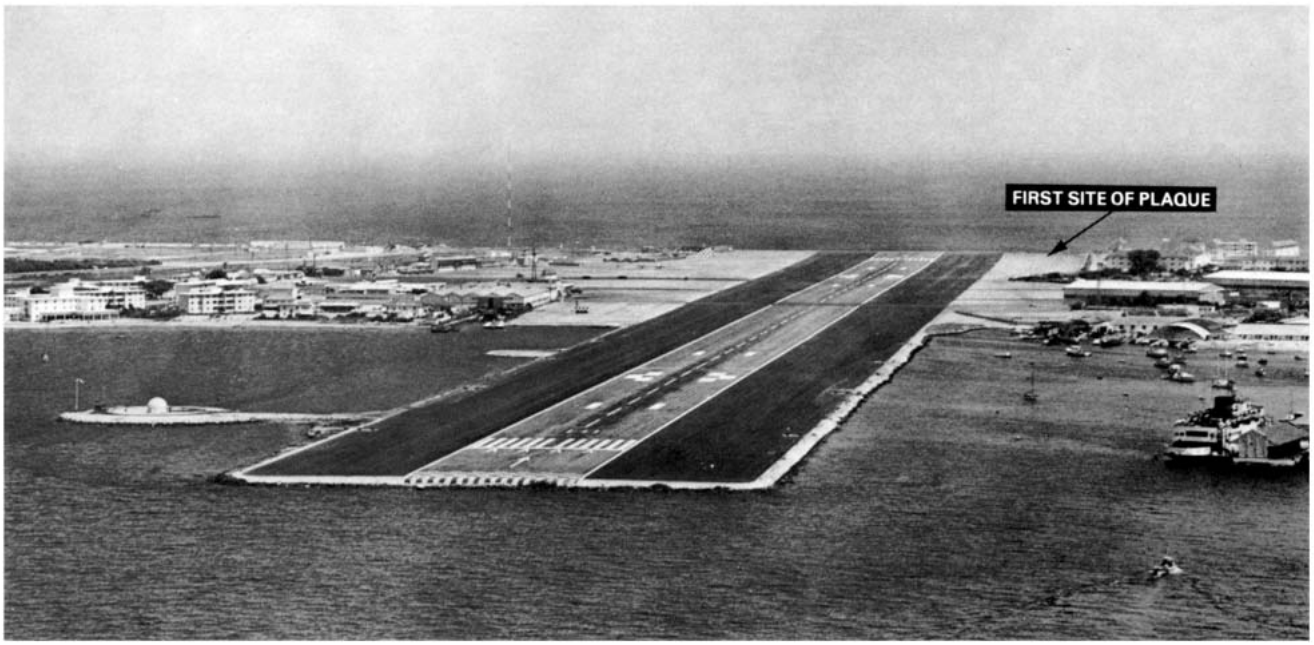
Flight Lieutenant Prchal had already telephoned the Convent announcing his desire to take off at 11.00 p.m. The total compliment of the Liberator would now be seventeen including the Polish courier. Let us continue the story in General Mason-Macfarlane's own words:

'We all set out for the aerodrome in very good spirits at about 10.00 p.m., and found Sikorski's Liberator all ready for him, with engines nicely warmed up. We saw the whole party on board, including Brigadier Whiteley, MP, and Colonel Victor Cazalet, MP. The last to board was Sikorski's daughter looking extremely attractive in battledress with a Polish cap.

'I knew the pilot — a Czech named Prchal — quite well, having flown with him on two or three previous occasions and, while the second pilot was finishing warming up the engines and doing preliminary cockpit checks, I had at least five minutes talk with him outside the aircraft. He was absolutely normal and, in fact, the best type of pre-war civilian airline pilot, which we had always known him to be.

'Finally, he climbed aboard and while he taxied to the western end of the runway, Simpson, my AOC and I walked down to the edge of the runway to give them a parting wave as they went by. Having turned his aircraft at the end of the runway, the pilot again revved up each of his engines in turn and then started his take-off run. The runway


100 0 500 1000 1500 2000
Ft
Feet
approx. position of witness no. 18
approx. position of witness no. 19
which A.L.523
edestrian crossing
rescue dinghy
boathouse & slipway
unserviceable portion of runway no vertical obstruction
220 yards
75 yds.
beach
floodlight (not lit)
flying control watch office
EXHIBIT A
Map used at the Court of Inquiry from Public Record Office file AIR 2/9234 declassified in 1972 (Crown Copyright). Witness No. 16 was the AOC, Air Commodore S. P. Simpson; No. 17 Aircraftman I. D. Qualtrough; No. 18 Leading Aircraftman H. D. Tisdale and No. 19 Leading Aircraftman E. R. Howes. The last three airman rushed to the rescue dinghy when the aircraft crashed.
position of crash
LEGEND
floodlight
yellow pylons with red glim lamp on top marking extremities of runway
unscreened white electric lamps (230 V. 60 W.)
red electric lamps (230 V. 60 W.)
red glim lamps (2.5 V. 3.5 W.) marking obstruction
IN USE ON NIGHT OF JULY 4th 1943



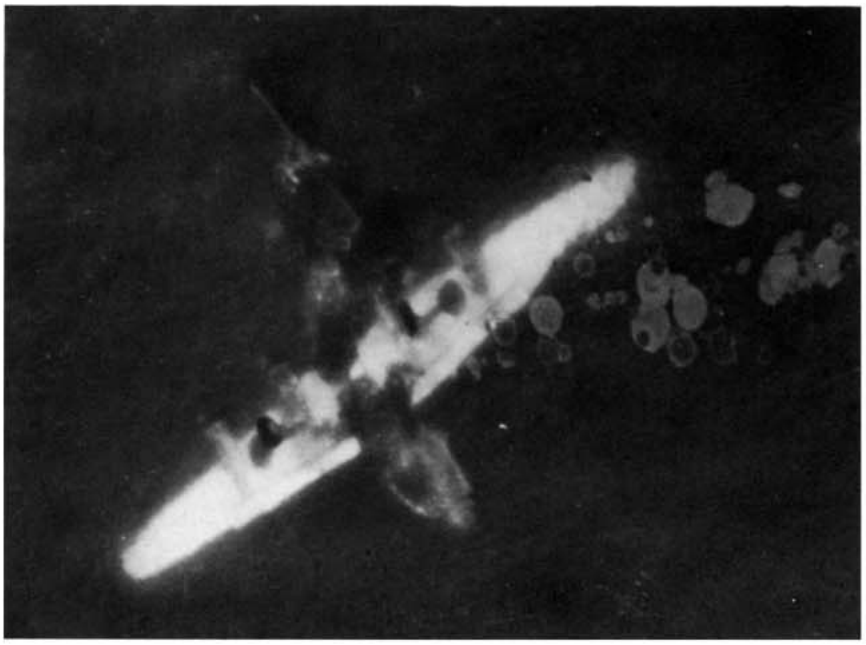
Left: North Front airfield photographed by the RAF looking east five months after the accident (Crown Copyright).

Above: The runway today showing the post-war extension at the western end. The round island on the left is the radar mole.

was 1,800 yards long and he took off easily with at least 500 yards in hand. In fact, by the time he was over the eastern end of the runway, he had reached an altitude of at least 2-300ft.

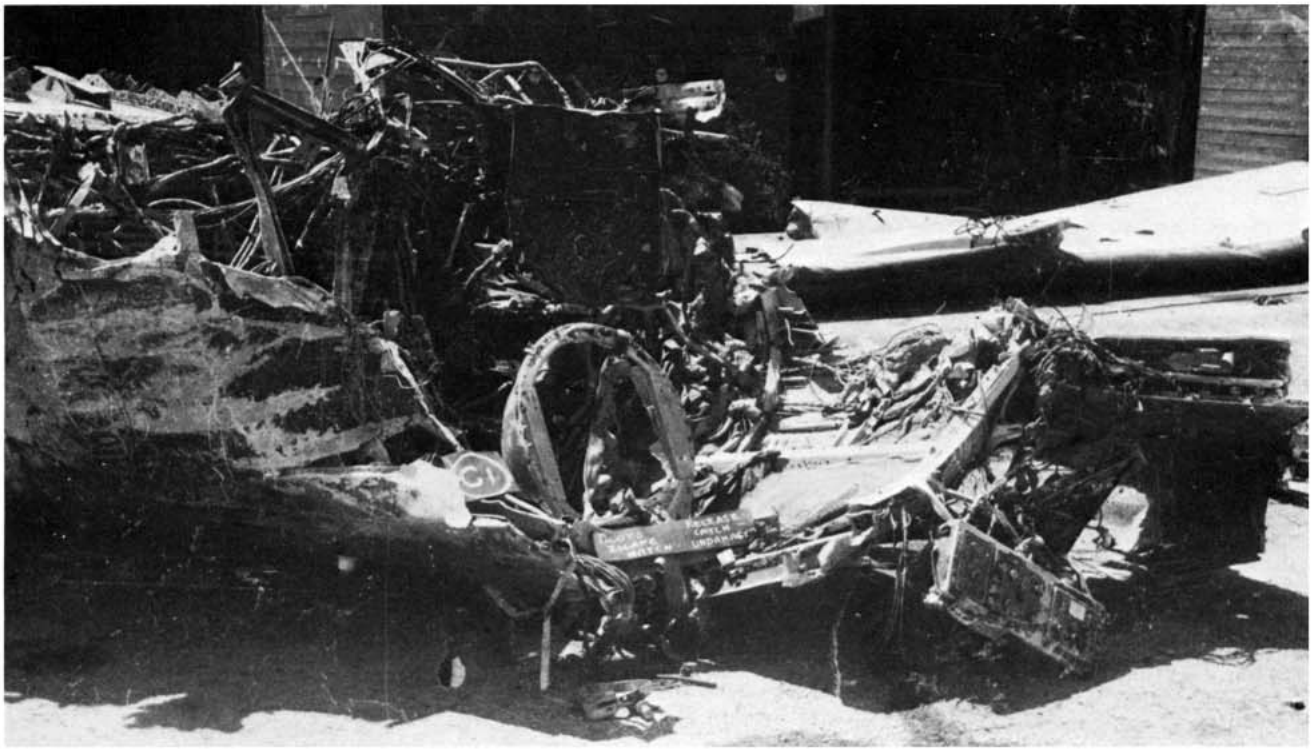
'It was a pitch dark night and the searchlights, with which the whole aerodrome area was normally illuminated all night, had been switched off as was always the case during the take-off of a machine, so as to avoid glare interfering with the pilot. In effect, by the time she reached the end of the runway, all that we could see of the aircraft was her navigation lights. We were just turning away saying to ourselves "well there's another valuable cargo safely on its way" when we suddenly noticed the navigation lights ceasing to rise and start slowly to descend. Simpson and I both made the same remark: anyone could tell that it was Prchal who was flying that aircraft as, after gaining a little height, he always put his nose down to get up rather more speed before starting his initial climb to cruising height. We waited a moment expecting to see the lights start to rise again. But they never did! In fact, the aircraft flew on a level keel and apparently in perfect shape straight into the sea at an angle of about ten degrees and hit the water with a sickening crash about three-quarters-of-a-mile from the shore. A split-second before she hit the water the pilot cut out his engines which had apparently been running perfectly.

'The next few minutes was a period during which I have seldom felt so helpless. Owing to the exposed nature of the coast, it was not possible to keep any air/sea rescue craft on the east side of the Rock, except for one small dinghy, which was quickly manned and started to pull out to the wreck, part of which remained floating in the light of the searchlights which had come on at once after the crash for several minutes. We knew that it would take the high-speed launch at least five or six minutes to reach the scene of the wreck from their moorings in the harbour on the west side of the Rock, and there was simply nothing to be done except wait. Before the first high-speed launch reached the scene, what was left of the wreck had all sunk out of sight. Within a very few minutes, the first launch started back, and I drove down at once to the waterport to discover what they had found. They had three bodies on board — Sikorski, his Chief-of-Staff, Klimecki, and the pilot. The first two were dead and had both suffered head injuries which must have resulted in instantaneous death. The pilot was still breathing and he was rushed off to hospital.'



The photograph of the wrecked Liberator lying upside down on the seabed taken by the Swordfish the morning after the crash first published in David Irving's book 'Accident'. The twin-fin tail assembly has broken off and lies in front of the engines and the undercarriage is only partly retracted. Fuel floats away from the damaged tanks.

The Liberator was salvaged over the next three days and the remains were placed on the northern side of the airfield close to Spanish Road *(photo above left)* **ready for examination by the Air Accident Inspector, Flight Lieutenant John W. Buck, who kindly supplied the photographs of the wreckage.** *Above right:* **The blister hanger still standing behind the post-war flying control building. The wartime watch office has now been demolished in the rebuilding of New Camp.**



Search and Salvage

Remains of the cockpit area with a notice indicating the pilot's escape hatch which, on the Liberator, was located in the cockpit roof and jettisoned by pulling a handle. Every relevant piece of wreckage was photographed.

The search for survivors continued throughout the night and during the daylight hours for the next ten days as the salvage report submitted by the Polish liaison officer, Lieutenant Lubienski records (Verbatim report with additions by the Editor in italics):

Sunday, July 4.

2308. Liberator crashed 500 yards off Eastern end of runway.

2315 to 0430/5. RAF High Speed Launch and Motor Launches searching area. Recovered 4 bodies. General Sikorski, Polish Major General. *(Klimecki Ed)* Brig. Whiteley. Mr. Lock (Civilian). and the Pilot (injured). Strong Southerly current took some of debris to SW of Europa Point.

Monday, July 5.

1045. K.H.M. ordered to render all possible Naval Assistance.

a.m. & p.m. *Moorhill (Royal Navy lifting vessel Ed.)* off-loading gear, berthing. *Lance* preparing chain bottom sweep for M.L. search. Aircraft located by Swordfish aircraft.

1720. *Moorhill* proceeded.

1826. *Moorhill* anchored off E. Beach.

Divers located and secured aircraft for slinging. Main wing-span intact, upside down. Fuselage badly crushed and in pieces. Tail unit separate. Wing-span lifted by the wheels. Body of one of the crew recovered from the aircraft. *(Gerry or Kelly Ed.)*

2130. At RAF request lowered wing-span to bottom.

Tuesday, July 6

0900. *Moorhill* in position.

Lifted wing-span again for RAF to photograph. Divers searching vicinity, together with XDO's shallow-water divers. Much debris collected in and around aircraft for about 200 yards.

a.m. Recovered bodies of 1 Polish Lieutenant, P.N. *(Ponikiewski Ed)* 1 Aircraft crew. *(Gerry or Kelly Ed.)*

p.m. Lowered wing-span which then turned over (wheels underneath).

2030. *Moorhill* returned.

Wednesday, July 7.

0900. *Moorhill* in position. Fuselage now broken away from wing-span. Wing-span lifted by slinging from propellor bosses and, after inspection by RAF and Polish officers, taken inshore and beached again in 2 fathoms. Search in bottom continuing by divers, shallow-water divers and water-glass. Recovered bodies of Lieut. Col. Cazalet. (Polish) W.O. Observer. *(Zalsberg Ed.)*

Moorhill remained out over-night intending work to continue by divers searching aircraft particularly for the body of the lady. But *Moorhill's* dynamo out of action, and emergency lighting set provided by RAF failed. On account of movements in Straits searchlights could not be used after 0200, and in any case were not very effective.

Thursday, July 8.

Search by divers, shallow-water divers and waterglass continuing. One separate portion of fuselage located and tail unit and hoisted on board *Moorhill.* Subsequently transferred (when *Moorhill* returned) by RNAS lighter to RAF, New Camp. Body of Polish soldier recovered. *(Gralewski Ed.)* *Moorhill* returned 1800, leaving 2 diving boats at anchor for the night.

Friday, July 9

No further work for *Moorhill.* Blossom with additional diving boat in position 1045 (waiting for weather report, Levant conditions). Divers collecting loose small portions of aircraft, and continuing search for bodies and effects. Weather deteriorating.

1430. Operations temporarily abandoned. Weather unsuitable for diving and small boat work.

p.m. Body of Polish Colonel washed ashore on Eastern Beach *(Marecki Ed.)*

As a result of discussion with Flight Lieutenant Posgate, the Captain of HSL 181, who searched the locality on the Sunday night, it is considered that the

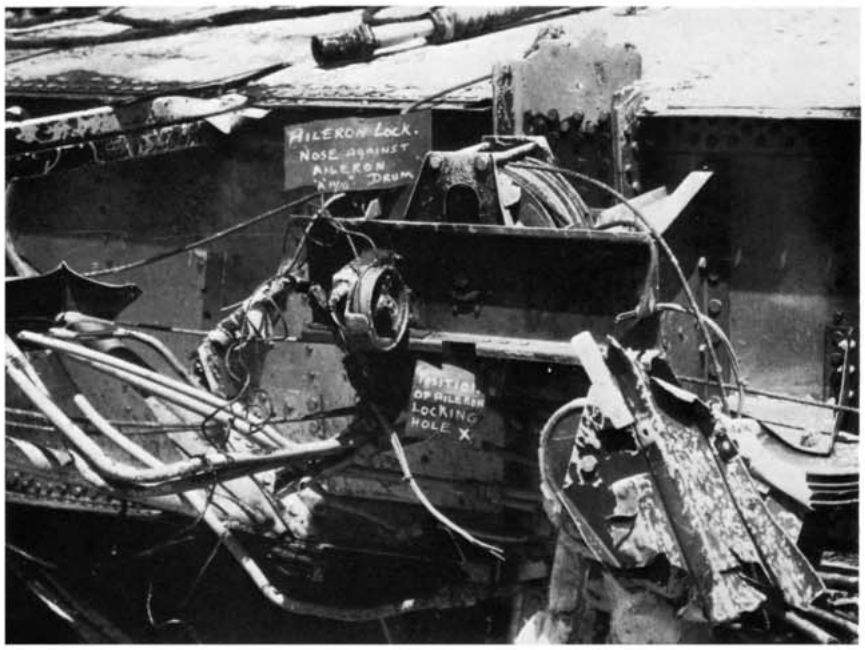
Flight Lieutenant John Buck beside a section of the Liberator.

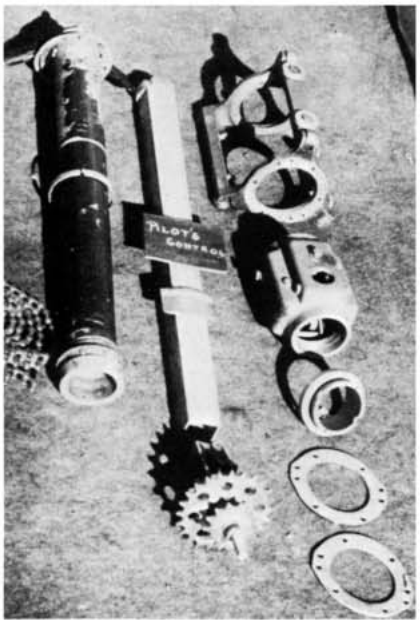
Leading Aircraftman J. P. Hammond, who assisted John Buck in the investigation.

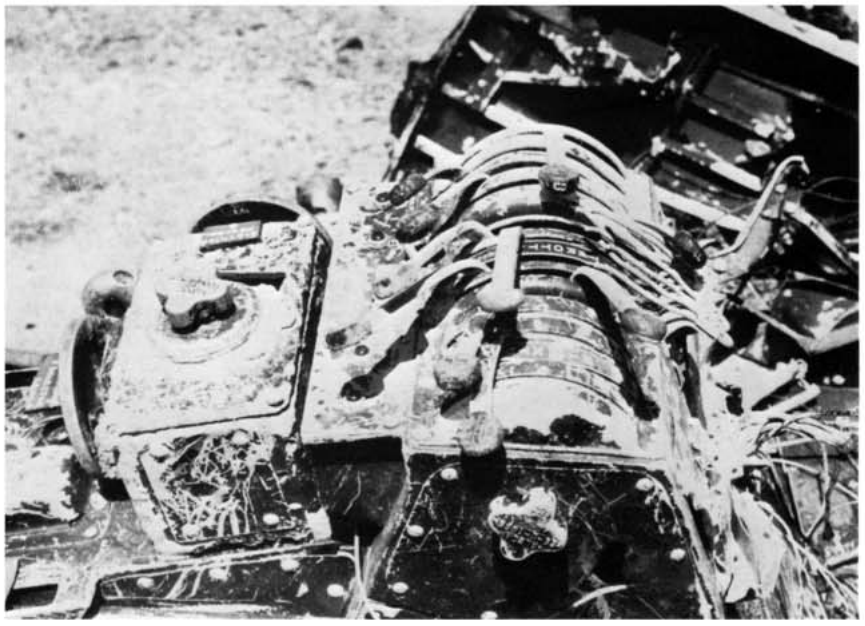
aircraft did not remain afloat for more than a few minutes: but that, during this period, the personnel in the forward part of the aircraft, some more seriously injured than others, endeavoured to extricate themselves. Their first consideration would naturally be the General and his daughter. Four bodies, and the Pilot (injured) were recovered by the HSL But the bodies of the 2nd pilot, the General's daughter and one of the Civil Staff have never been seen — although some of the Lady's personal effects have been recovered.

It seems possible that these three did manage to extricate themselves from the aircraft and possibly remained afloat for a brief period, but subsequently, because of their injuries, were drowned. They may well have drifted some distance from the wreck, and been missed in the darkness by the HSML. This would also account for their bodies not being found near the wreck as were nearly all the others recovered.

After operations were abandoned a warning was passed to all the Military posts on the East Side to keep a sharp lookout for bodies and debris which might be washed ashore by the Easterly winds, especially on the more inaccessible beaches and caves.







Saturday, July 10 to Monday, July 12.
Conditions unsuitable for mooring lighter or divers owing to Levanter wind, and swell and surf off Eastern Beach. Preparing gear for resuming a close combing search of bottom by shallow-water divers.

Tuesday, July 13
Diving operations resumed, chiefly with shallow-water divers who worked on a 'set' scheme to comb an area about 400 yards long between the two fathom and five fathom lines — with the original site of the wreck as centre.

Deep-water divers were used for heavier debris which could not be handled by shallow-water divers — they also searched outside the five fathom line.

Conditions were not good for divers owing to swell and undertow — and to amount of sand in suspension in the water — giving a visibility of only a few feet.

Wednesday, July 14.
Conditions slightly better than previous day, and similar operations continued. A 'dredge' on the lines of an enlarged 'prawn' dredge was towed by steam-boat and collected small pieces of debris outside the five fathom line. But neither this nor the divers' efforts provided anything of interest or value.

Thursday, July 15.
Diving continued at request of Chief Technical Officer RAF. *Moorhill* lifted main wing-span and brought it to Gunwharf.

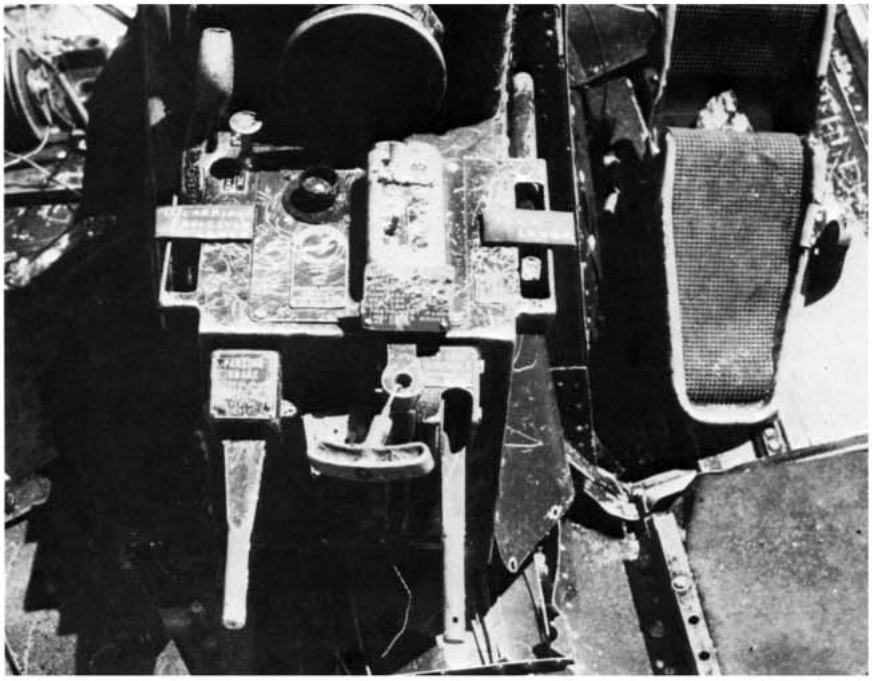
During the operation of transferring from *Moorhill* to Gunwharf crane, a strop parted, and the consequent whipping of one of *Moorhill's* lighting wires caused fatal injuries to a Spanish labourer of the mooring party. Death was almost instantaneous.

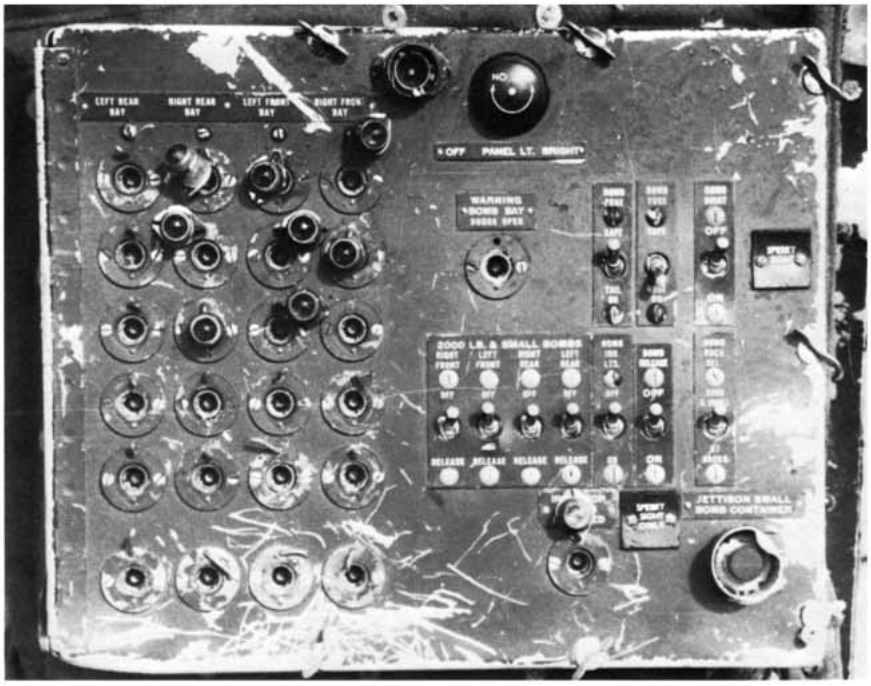
Main wing-span finally landed on Gunwharf, where it was found that the 'control gear' was sufficiently intact to provide valuable evidence for the RAF Board of Inquiry.

Friday, July 16.
Shallow-water diving operations continued — further small items being recovered but nothing of value or interest except one propellor. Another propellor was buoyed but buried too far in sand for lifting by SW divers.

Saturday, July 17.
As the result of information from
(a) The Chief Technical Officer, RAF
(b) Naval Liaison Officer to HE The Governor. Polish Military Liaison Officer, salvage operations ceased.

The RAF dismantled the wreck of the wing-span and removed it in pieces from the Gunwharf — the work being completed by p.m. Sunday, July 18.





The Funeral

The bodies recovered on Sunday, July 4 had been taken to the Army mortuary at the Casemates where they were examined by the RAF Medical Officer, Dr. Peter Sutton. There were no coffins immediately available in Gibraltar and it was only after a supreme effort that Major Quayle was able to obtain one for each person on the plane from Spain. When these arrived Quayle, together with Lieutenant Lubienski and Lieutenant Rosycki, the local Polish commanding officer, transferred the bodies of General Sikorski and Major-General Klimecki, wrapped in naval blankets, into their coffins. The thin zinc lining was sealed and the coffins nailed shut.

The Governor, ever mindful of the July heat in Gibraltar (where all burials are carried out within a day), had recommended that the bodies be flown to England immediately. However he was overruled by the Polish Government in London who felt it would be more fitting for the remains of their Generals to be returned by sea. As the Polish destroyer detailed for the task, the *Orkan,* would take at least 48 hours to arrive in Gibraltar, it was decided, therefore, that the bodies would, in the meantime, lie in state in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Mary the Crowned in Main Street.

At 8.30 p.m. on Monday the two coffins, each covered with the Polish National Flag, were loaded on the back of open lorries to be transferred from the mortuary. Led by Major-General F. G. Hyland, Deputy Fortress Commander, and escorted by a colour party from the Somerset Light Infantry, the cortege moved off across Grand Casemates Square. Although the square lies at the northern end of Main Street, the procession took a round-about route along Line Wall Road, the Governor and Flag Officer Gibraltar joining the procession en route. As the troops stood at the 'present', the two flag-draped coffins were borne shoulder high into the Cathedral. There the same Polish soldiers, who had been inspected by the General the day before, began a round the clock vigil guarding the catafalque. Later that evening, the Governor returned to lay wreaths of red and white flowers on the two coffins.

Top: **The coffin containing the body of General Sikorski is transported to the Cathedral of St. Mary the Crowned in Main Street. The cortege has just left the mortuary and is crossing Grand Casemates Square (IWM).** *Above:* **The Square is virtually unchanged today being used for car parking. The Casemates in the background were Army barracks until 1957 when the Seaforth Highlanders left and are now used by Moroccan labourers.**

Right: **The old Army mortuary just beside Landport Tunnel is now a private dwelling.**

The bodies remained lying-in-state throughout Tuesday and Wednesday. Word had now been received that the *Orkan* would arrive early Thursday morning and a funeral ceremony was therefore timed to be held in the Cathedral before the coffins were taken to the ship in solemn procession at 8.15 a.m.

Towards midnight on Wednesday, Lieutenant Lubienski paid a last visit to the Cathedral to check on the arrangements for the following day. He arrived to find a situation of the utmost horror. The Polish soldiers who had been left on guard were standing outside the Cathedral, terrified to go inside because of 'ghosts'. As Lubienski entered the cathedral, he was aware of a most sickening smell with strange noises coming from the direction of the catafalque. Removing the flag from General Sikorski's coffin, the reason for the stench was obvious: in the terrific heat, wrapped in the sodden blanket, the General's body had putrefied with remarkable speed, the expanding gases bursting the zinc seal like a bomb. Ominous noises from Major-General Klimecki's coffin in-

Above: **The two funeral tenders pass the American War Memorial arch in Line Wall Road (IWM).** *Below:* **Our comparison picture, taken in July 1977, from the Shell Garage beside Fish Market Road.**

Left: **The procession, having now been joined by the Governor, has turned into Main Street and approaches the Cathedral (IWM).** *Above:* **Main Street is the hub of life in Gibraltar today. This is the same view from the dentist's surgery at No. 216.**

Left: **General Sikorski's flag-draped coffin is removed from the tender and carried into the cathedral,** *above* **(IWM).** *Below:* **The two coffins Lying-in-State on the catafalque (Polish Institute).**

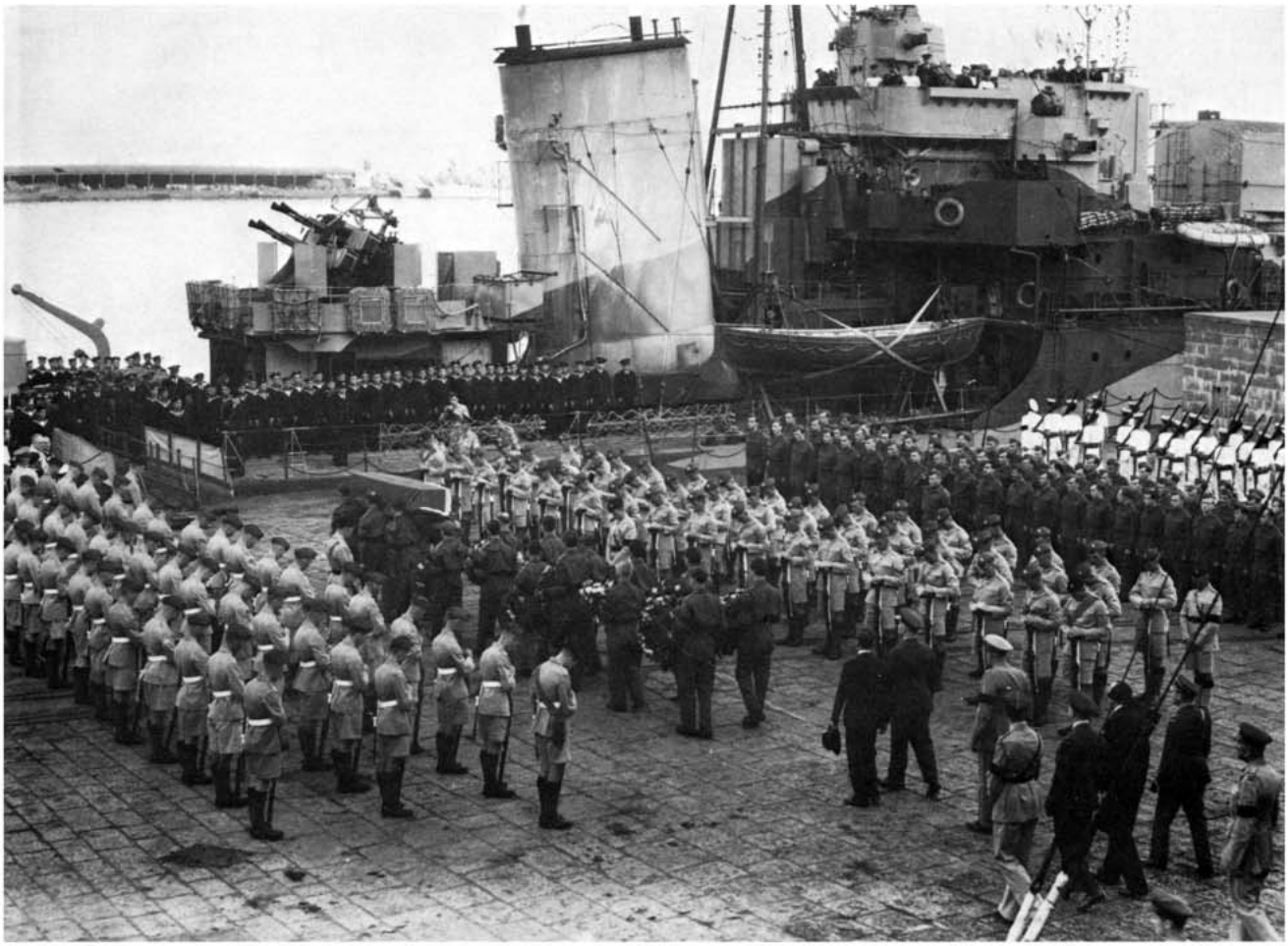
dicated that it also was about to burst. With the service due to begin in under eight hours time, Lieutenant Lubienski raised the alarm.

The Governor ordered his ADC, Flight Lieutenant Perry, to collect the coffins and return them to the mortuary using his jeep. Main Street was silent and deserted as the coffins were carried out and other soldiers arrived to clean up and fumigate the interior of the Cathedral. Reaching the mortuary, Lieutenants Lubienski and Rosycki steeled themselves for the gruesome task of transferring the decaying bodies into new coffins, thankful now that the remains had been left wrapped in the blankets. Luckily spare coffins were immediately available as not all the bodies of the passengers had been recovered. With just minutes to spare before the congregation were allowed in for the service, the coffins had been re-lined inside and out, welded shut and secretly returned to the cathedral where fresh flowers had been laid out.

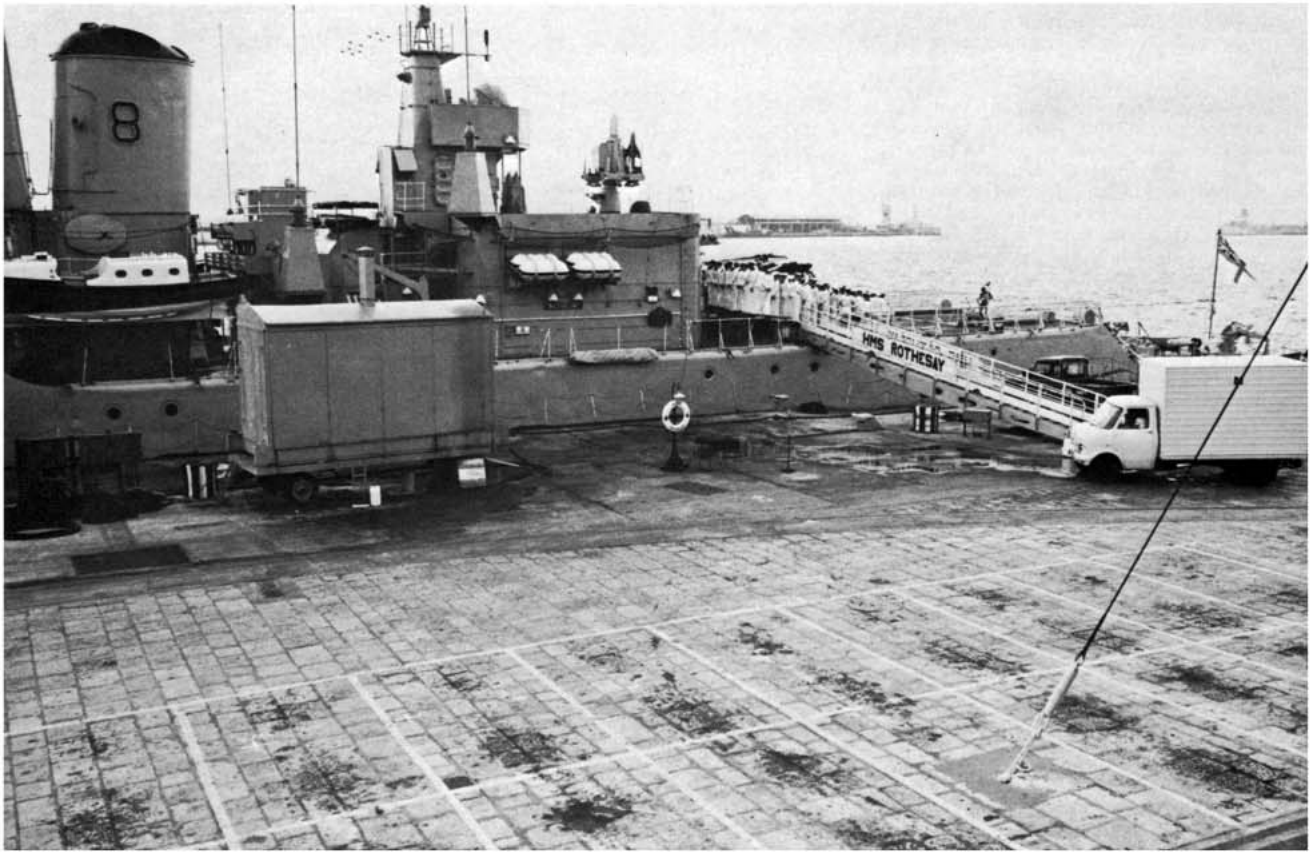
Meanwhile Flight Lieutenant Perry, still acting as unofficial undertaker, had been instructed to take the coffin containing the body of Sikorski's British liaison officer, Colonel Cazalet, direct to the *Orkan* in his jeep to be loaded on board for return to England before the main procession arrived. However when he reached the quay where the *Orkan* was berthed outside the naval headquarters building, The Tower, the superstitious Polish captain refused to take the coffin on board. In fact, he told Perry, he was reluctant even to take that of Major-General Klimecki. Flight Lieutenant Perry continued to argue with the captain until the procession could be heard entering the dockyard gates only a few hundred yards away. Then, having no option, Perry backed his jeep out of sight until the coast was clear for him to return to the mortuary.

In spite of the captain's objections that the ship would be doomed if it carried both bodies, the two coffins were loaded aboard and the *Orkan* slipped anchor and moved slowly out of the harbour to the strains of a British military band.

Left: **Thursday, July 8, 8.30 a.m. The coffin, now on a gun carriage, is pulled slowly past the Convent en route to the Naval Dockyard (Polish Institute).** *Above:* **July 1977 from the balcony of No. 293 Main Street.**



Above: **Having entered the Naval Dockyard by the North Gate the cortege halts on the quayside. The Polish destroyer** *Orkan* **(formerly the** *Mymiddon* **built for the Royal Navy in 1940) was torpedoed on October 8, 1943 (Polish Institute).** *Below:* **In July 1977, HMS** *Rothesay* **was conveniently berthed in the same place with her crew lined up on deck for a group photograph.**



The Controversy

By the evening of Monday, July 5, 1943, German radio was broadcasting throughout Europe the first allegation that the British Secret Service had murdered General Sikorski. The General's death was immediately coupled to the assassination of Admiral Darlan six months previously in North Africa and, it was claimed by the German propaganda machine, that both men had policies which had proved troublesome to the British Government. However easily one can dismiss these early allegations as sheer mischief-making, the first seeds had been sown in a controversy which has lasted to the present day.

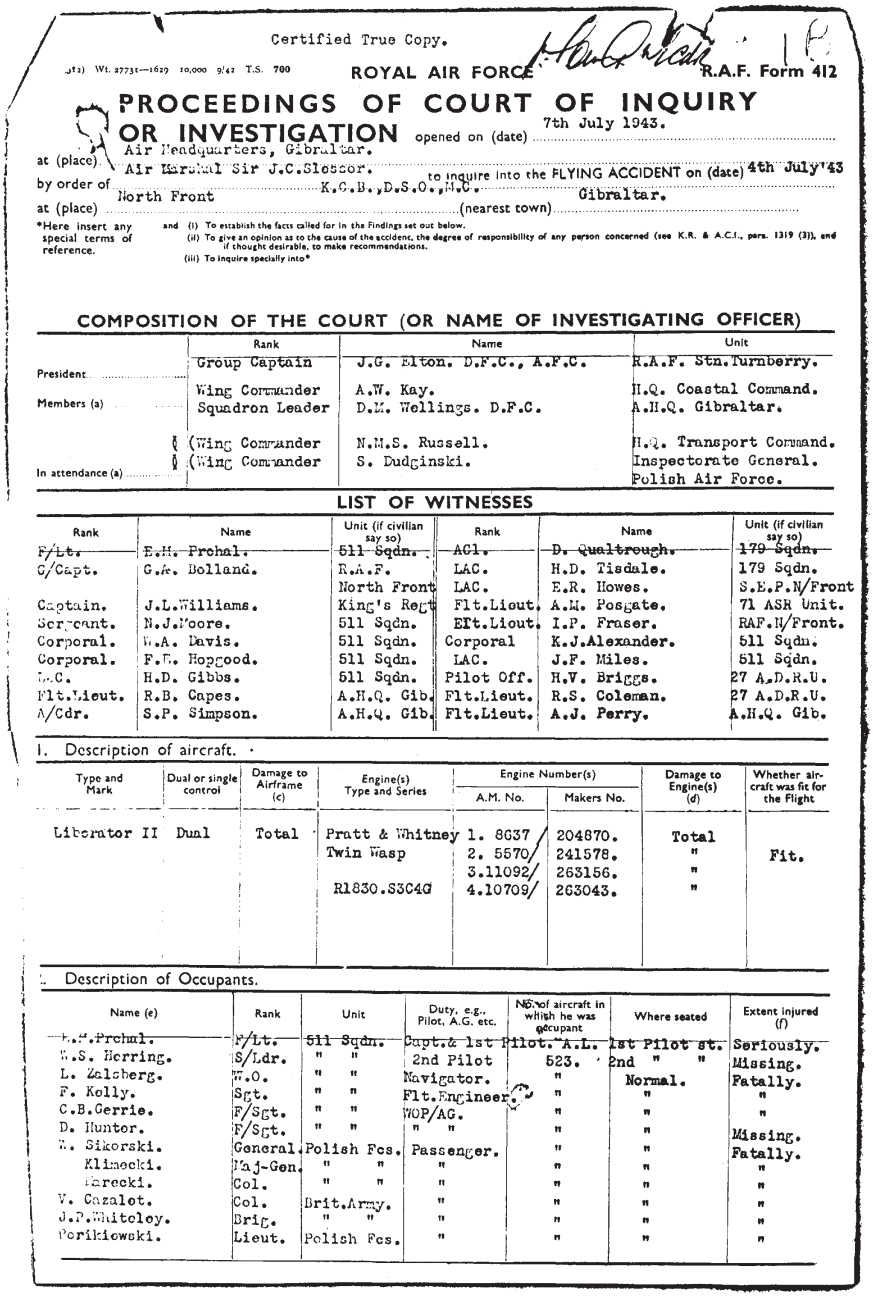
The Court of Inquiry to establish the cause of the crash was opened at Air Headquarters, Gibraltar, on July 7, 1943 and was presided over by Group Captain J. G. Elton DFC, AFC. Altogether 28 witnesses were called including the pilot who had recovered from his injuries. The fact that the pilot was the only one to survive the crash has led many armchair investigators to suggest that Flight Lieutenant Prchal crashed the Liberator deliberately with the intention of killing the General. To back up this theory, the description of events by General Mason-Macfarlane (from which we have already quoted) is often used:

'There was one very extraordinary fact. The pilot, like nearly all pilots, had his idiosyncracies, and he never, under any circumstances, wore his Mae West either taking off or landing. He had his Mae West hung over the back of his seat where it would be handy if required. He stoutly maintained in evidence that he had not departed from his usual practice, and that when he started his take-off run, he was not wearing his Mae West. The fact remains that when he was picked up out of the water he was found to be not only wearing his Mae West, but every tape and fastening had been properly put on and done up.'

However, the General goes on to qualify this statement with his personal explanation of the crash:

'Personally, I am reasonably convinced that the accident was definitely one which falls into the category of the human element. Although when I said "goodbye" to Prchal just before he climbed aboard he appeared absolutely normal, I think that he must have had some form of mental aberration which led him, for the first time in years, to put on his Mae West. I think that this mental abberation ceased while he was actually taking off, but that it came on again almost at once, that in the darkness he lost his horizon, and that, in fact, he flew the aircraft inexorably straight into the sea without realising what he was doing until the very last second when it was too late to do anything except switch off his engines. All this is further corroborated by the fact that, when the aircraft hit the water, the undercarriage was still down and locked in the "down" position whereas, normally, any pilot would pull up his undercarriage within a matter of seconds of becoming airborne. Many of us on the Rock indulged in a great deal of thought and speculation regarding how such an inexplicable crash should have occurred, and all those whose judgement I value, including my AOC, finally agreed with me that the disaster was clearly due either to an error of judgement or, more likely, a temporary blackout on the part of the pilot.

'The question of sabotage was also raised' wrote General Mason-Macfarlane 'but rejected as the machine had a Commando and RAF guard on her during the whole stay on Gibraltar aerodrome while Sikorski was on the Rock'.



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PROCEEDINGS OF COURT OF INQUIRY OR INVESTIGATION opened on (date) 7th July 1943.

at (place) Air Headquarters, Gibraltar.

by order of Air Marshal Sir J.C.Slessor. to inquire into the FLYING ACCIDENT on (date) 4th July'43

at (place) North Front (nearest town) Gibraltar.

*Here insert any special terms of reference.

and (i) To establish the facts called for in the Findings set out below.
(ii) To give an opinion as to the cause of the accident, the degree of responsibility of any person concerned (see K.R. & A.C.I., para. 1319 (3)), and if thought desirable, to make recommendations.
(iii) To inquire specially into*

COMPOSITION OF THE COURT (OR NAME OF INVESTIGATING OFFICER)

	Rank	Name	Unit
President	Group Captain	J.G. Elton. D.F.C., A.F.C.	R.A.F. Stn.Turnberry.
Members (a)	Wing Commander	A.W. Kay.	H.Q. Coastal Command.
	Squadron Leader	D.M. Wellings. D.F.C.	A.H.Q. Gibraltar.
In attendance (a)	(Wing Commander	N.M.S. Russell.	H.Q. Transport Command.
	(Wing Commander	S. Dudzinski.	Inspectorate General. Polish Air Force.

LIST OF WITNESSES

Rank	Name	Unit (if civilian say so)	Rank	Name	Unit (if civilian say so)
F/Lt.	E.H. Prchal.	511 Sqdn.	ACl.	D. Qualtrough.	179 Sqdn.
G/Capt.	G.A. Bolland.	R.A.F. North Front	LAC.	H.D. Tisdale.	179 Sqdn.
			LAC.	E.R. Howes.	S.E.P.N/Front
Captain.	J.L.Williams.	King's Regt	Flt.Lieut.	A.M. Posgate.	71 ASR Unit.
Sergeant.	N.J.Moore.	511 Sqdn.	Flt.Lieut.	I.P. Fraser.	RAF.H/Front.
Corporal.	W.A. Davis.	511 Sqdn.	Corporal	K.J.Alexander.	511 Sqdn.
Corporal.	F.E. Hopgood.	511 Sqdn.	LAC.	J.F. Miles.	511 Sqdn.
W.C.	H.D. Gibbs.	511 Sqdn.	Pilot Off.	H.V. Briggs.	27 A.D.R.U.
Flt.Lieut.	R.B. Capes.	A.H.Q. Gib.	Flt.Lieut.	R.S. Coleman.	27 A.D.R.U.
A/Cdr.	S.P. Simpson.	A.H.Q. Gib.	Flt.Lieut.	A.J. Perry.	A.H.Q. Gib.

1. Description of aircraft.

Type and Mark	Dual or single control	Damage to Airframe (c)	Engine(s) Type and Series	Engine Number(s) A.M. No.	Engine Number(s) Makers No.	Damage to Engine(s) (d)	Whether aircraft was fit for the Flight
Liberator II	Dual	Total	Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R1830.S3C4G	1. 8637	204870.	Total	Fit.
				2. 5570/ 3.11092/ 4.10709/	241578. 263156. 263043.	" " "	

2. Description of Occupants.

Name (e)	Rank	Unit	Duty, e.g., Pilot, A.G. etc.	No. of aircraft in which he was occupant	Where seated	Extent injured (f)
E.H.Prchal.	F/Lt.	511 Sqdn.	Capt.& 1st Pilot.	A.L. 523.	1st Pilot st.	Seriously.
W.S. Herring.	S/Ldr.	" "	2nd Pilot		2nd " "	Missing.
L. Zalsberg.	W.O.	" "	Navigator.		"	Fatally.
F. Kelly.	Sgt.	" "	Flt.Engineer.		"	"
C.B.Gerrie.	F/Sgt.	" "	WOP/AG.		"	"
D. Hunter.	F/Sgt.	" "	" "		"	Missing.
W. Sikorski.	General.	Polish Fcs.	Passenger.		"	Fatally.
Klimecki.	Maj-Gen.	" "	"		"	"
Marecki.	Col.	" "	"		"	"
V. Cazalot.	Col.	Brit.Army.	"		"	"
J.P.Whiteley.	Brig.	" "	"		"	"
Perikiewski.	Lieut.	Polish Fcs.	"		"	"

The first page of the report on the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry held at Gibraltar. There were nine additional witnesses and five other occupants who are listed on a continuation sheet. (From Public Record Office file AIR 2/9234 Crown Copyright).

Flight Lieutenant Prchal's own explanation was given during his cross-examination when called as the first witness at the Court of Inquiry:

'I am a pilot in No. 511 Squadron, and on July 4th 1943 I was captain of Liberator aircraft No. AL523. On 3rd July 1943 I landed at Gibraltar at approximately 1630 hours having flown from Cairo West. The aircraft was in every way serviceable. After landing the aircraft was "D.Ied" by my Flight Engineer, and also by the ground staff of 511 Squadron at Gibraltar. On 4th July 1943, at approximately 2240 I went aboard the aircraft and was satisfied everything was in order. I did not see where the passengers were seated, but before we started the engines the Flight Engineer reported to me that all the passengers were properly seated. There were eleven passengers, five of whom were in the bomb bay and six in the fuselage. This was one more than when we took off from Cairo, the extra passenger being seated in the bomb bay. The all up weight was approximately 52,000 lbs. I was quite satisfied with the disposal of the load. I started my engines and warmed them up, and then proceeded to the end of the runway where I ran them up and did the normal cockpit check. Everything was satisfactory. I received the "green" signal at 2310 hours and commenced to take off. At about 130 m.p.h. I was airborne. When I was at about 150 feet I eased the control column forward to gather speed. My speed built up to 165 m.p.h. I wanted to climb again so attempted to pull back the control column but I could not do so. The control column was definitely locked. I told my second pilot over the inter-communication to check over the controls quickly. At this time the undercarriage was fully up and the flaps half-down, that is normal take off position. When I found I was unable to move the control column I put on trim in an endeavour to gain height, but nothing happened. All this time I was pulling back on the control column but could not move it backwards. I got no reply from the second pilot over the inter-communication and the aircraft was rapidly approaching the water. I then shouted out "crash landing" to

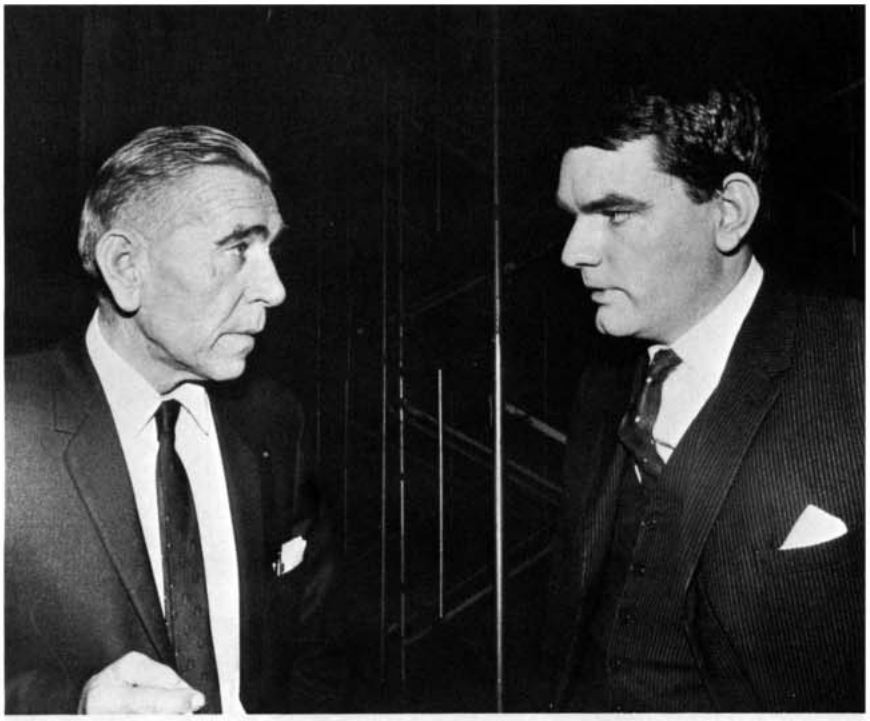
the crew and closed the throttles. The aircraft immediately hit the water and I remember no more.'

In 1963, David Irving, the thorough, if controversial author, published his first book 'The Destruction of Dresden'. Like all his subsequent publications, the book caused a commotion because of Mr. Irving's fearless disregard for established thought. The implications in the book that the Dresden bombing could be classed as an atrocity appealed to a German playwright, Rolf Hochhuth, reinforcing his own personal beliefs and resentment over the bombing of Germany. (Hochhuth's first successful play, *The Deputy,* had appeared in 1961.)

David Irving explained to the editor that he first met Hochhuth in Hamburg in February 1965. 'About a year later, Rolf asked me to stop over at Cologne and see him. We met in an open-air restaurant near the cathedral. He, furtive as ever, informed me that one consequence of his play was that he had been approached at a cocktail party in Switzerland by an embittered former British officer who had been in British Intelligence, who told him quite flatly that the Sikorski crash was sabotage caused by the then British government; that Rolf could have his word for that; that even the most superficial investigation would reveal that and — most important of all — this colonel had been chief of the team that had procured the crash. Rolf then began plaguing me to look into the matter on his behalf, doing background research. He was, he said, going to write a play to be called *The Soldiers* anyway on the subject as he was completely satisfied with what he had been told. But he would not be able to divulge the officer's name until that man's death; he had a written record of the man's depositions filed in a Swiss bank safe.

'Rolf kept plugging away at me to start. I was loath to do so. The first move we agreed to make was to look into the papers of the Governor of Gibraltar, Mason-Macfarlane. His family live in Scotland. Eventually, I made the trip up there and searched through the papers. By this time, incidentally, Rolf's play was complete and in rehearsals. In Mason-Macfarlane's papers I found nothing until the very last moment — a five-page typescript by him, dated July 1945, relating the events of that night Sikorski died *(mentioned and quoted earlier Ed).* This typescript showed plainly that Mason-Macfarlane thought there had been something fishy. Mason-Macfarlane, who was a military Intelligence officer in France in 1940 and military attache in Berlin and Moscow at other times, was no fool; nor am I — and that was why I then decided the whole case was worth investing time and effort on.'

Argentinian actor-cum-author Carlos Thompson (Keystone).



Edward Prchal (left), pilot and sole survivor of the Liberator crash, meets British author David Irving in Toronto for a television interview on March 10, 1968 (Toronto Star).

The controversy over *The Soldiers* continued throughout the early months of 1967 especially when it became known that the play was under consideration for production by the National Theatre of England. Presentation of the play was strongly supported by Kenneth Tynan, the theatre's literary advisor, although Sir Laurence Olivier, the Artistic Director, voiced grave doubts. At this stage, another writer entered the scene — Argentinian-born Carlos Thompson. At first, Thompson, a close friend of the Oliviers, set out to help Sir Laurence come to a decision over the play but, as he became more and more involved, Thompson's investigation became a personal crusade to leave no stone unturned in the search for the facts and possible motives behind the German playwright's work. For nearly two years, working and travelling literally by day and night, Thompson sought out dozens of witnesses believing he would perform a public service in clearing the name of Churchill whose family were deprived of any means of defence since the law of England provides no remedy for defamation of the dead.

While the Thompson investigation was proceeding, the play, initially banned in Britain, received its German premiere in Berlin on October 9, 1967 — simultaneously with the publication of David Irving's book *Accident* in London. Articles in *Der Spiegel* and a television interview with Irving and Hochhuth in Hamburg on the day of the premiere helped to keep the story front-page news although, surprisingly, Irving's book itself, begun at Hochhuth's instigation, gave no credence to the latter's claim of British sabotage.

David Irving's *Accident* is a straightforward, factual account of the events leading up to the crash, the inquiry and its aftermath. The editor can vouch for the meticulous detail of Mr. Irving's research as he kindly made all his investigation material, interview transcripts and correspondence files freely available to us, to examine and photocopy as we wished. It is largely as a result of his generous offer of help that this account of the Sikorski story has been able to be written. The same could not be said of any official help extended to David Irving during his research for the book as the Ministry department AR3 instructed several persons concerned in the affair not to speak with Irving. We were therefore surprised to find a photocopy of the Proceedings of the Court of Inquiry, upon which Mr. Irving based much of his account, as this was not made available to the public until 1972! (Public Record Office File AIR2/9234.)

Accident argues out the pros and cons of many of the theories for possible explanations of the crash and is a must for those readers wanting to read more about it. Unfortunately the one weakness of the book is that David Irving failed to personally visit the pilot, Edward Prchal, for his comments, although *The Daily Telegraph* had traced him as living in a suburb of Los Angeles in California, after previous reports stated that he had been killed in a bar-room brawl in Chicago in 1955.

The Soldiers, however, did set out to crucify Winston Churchill as being acquiescent in the murder of General Sikorski and the matter was brought to a head in a David Frost TV interview with Churchill's son Randolph, Tynan and Irving on October 19, 1967.

Regardless of the fact that the play was reviewed badly in the German press, its English language premiere was arranged for March 1968 in Toronto. The result was a quick follow-up interview between David Irving and Edward Prchal (the first time they had met) on Canadian television on March 10, a discussion which developed into a verbal slanging match, Prchal accusing Irving of not having had the courtesy of interviewing him before publishing his book.

Carlos Thompson had, however, been to see Prchal in Los Altos, California, in November the previous year, finding him helpful and willing to talk. The full text of this interview appeared in Thompson's book *The Assassination of Winston Churchill* which appeared in 1968. This book is a fascinating saga of investigation, with David Irving and Rolf Hochhuth its main stars, and should be read in conjunction with *Accident* as a

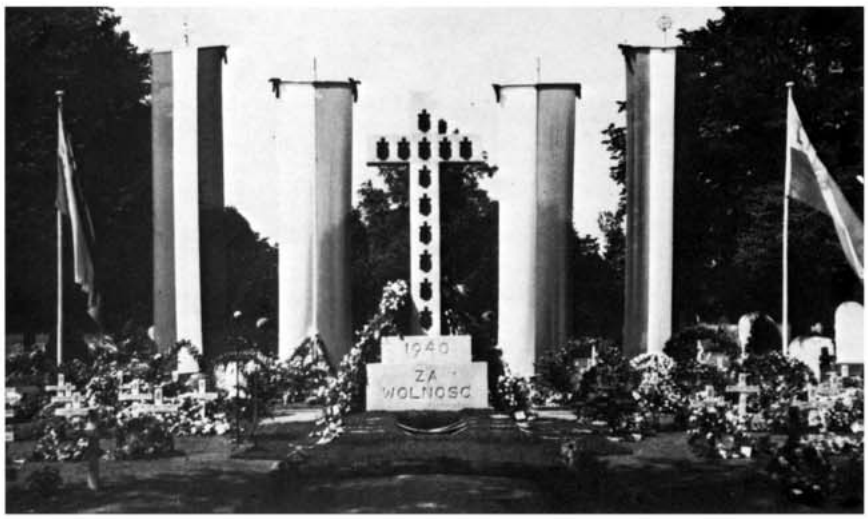
continuation of the Sikorski mystery. Its publication led to a fitting climax to the whole affair when David Frost invited all the interested parties — Thompson, Irving, Prchal, Tynan and Winston Churchill, the grandson, — to a memorable TV debate before the nation on December 20, 1968 — so profound that the interview was continued the following evening — certainly one of the most fascinating television presentations ever.

Right: **The Frost Programme — a studio hand indicates five minutes to go. It is difficult to say if this picture was taken during the live programme on the 20th or the follow-up as this was videotaped after a ten-minute break. Kenneth Tynan, in the front row of the audience (unfortunately hiding Winston Churchill), leans forward to make a point. On the rostrum David Irving, David Frost, the presenter, Carlos Thompson and Edward Prchal. London Weekend Television received numerous complaints about the way the programme was conducted. Unfortunately LWT refused us permission to reproduce the actual photograph — hence our artist's copy (George Campbell).**

The Last Journey

When the Orkan arrived in Plymouth on July 10, the coffins were transferred to London using a specially-prepared railway coach, decorated like a small Catholic chapel. A guard of honour, formed of members of the Grenadier Guards, was lined up on the platform as the train steamed into Paddington Station, London. From the station, the coffins were transferred to the Polish Government's headquarters in Kensington Palace Gardens for the official Lying-in-State until July 14. The following day, a Requiem Mass was held in Westminster Cathedral attended by Winston Churchill and members of the British Government and Chiefs-of-Staff, after which the coffins were borne away to Newark in Nottinghamshire where a war cemetery had been established for Polish forces. There, General Sikorski was laid to rest in an imposing central position. Major-General Klimecki, Colonel Marecki and Lieutenant Ponikiewski, whose bodies had been found later and returned to England, were buried in the third row, some sixty feet to the left of the cross.

Above: **July 10, 1943. The** *Orkan* **arrives at Plymouth and the General's body is borne away on a gun carriage.** *Below:* **Meanwhile at Newark the General's grave awaits; five days later he was laid here to rest. This was intended as a temporary grave only until his remains could be returned to Wawelu Castle in Cracow after the war (IWM).**



Above left: **A corner of North Front cemetery photographed in June 1945. The graves of Colonel Cazalet, Bombardier Gralewski and Brigadier Whiteley are in the far corner (IWM).** *Right:* **The three graves now have standard CWGC headstones.**

The body of the Polish courier, Private Gralewski, recovered on July 8, was buried the following day in Gibraltar North Front Cemetery (Plot 1, Grave A6). Colonel Cazalet whose remains the Orkan's captain had refused to accept, was buried alongside (Grave A5) on July 12 together with the other British Member of Parliament, Brigadier Whiteley (Grave A7).

The bodies of two of the RAF crew members recovered, Flight Sergeant Gerry and Sergeant Kelly, were buried at sea, their names being inscribed on the Gibraltar Memorial. The Jewish wireless operator, Louis Zalsberg was buried in North Front Jewish Cemetery and, without an exact location, it took us a considerable time to find his grave among the crowded coffin-shaped tombstones. The graves are so close together that one has to walk, rather irreverently, on top of the tombstones, the Hebrew inscriptions not helping identification. Luckily Zalsberg's stone is also inscribed with Roman lettering although the date of death is given according to the Jewish calendar as 1 Tammuz 5703. The bodies of Squadron Leader Herring

The War Memorial beside the airfield.

The Jewish grave of Louis Zalsberg.

Above: **The Governor of Gibraltar, Lieutenant-General Sir Ralph Eastwood, places a wreath on the plaque unveiled at the south-eastern corner of the runway (IWM).** *Right:* **No trace remains to mark where the plaque lay although the ring in the foreground helps identify the spot.**

and Flight Sergeant Hunter were never found and their names are recorded on the Runnymede Memorial (Panels 118 and 137 respectively).

The other bodies not recovered were those of the General's daughter, Zofia, his secretary, Mr. Kulakowski, and the believed-Secret Service agent Pinder. The body of the other civilian, Walter Lock, had been recovered immediately after the crash but we have been unable to trace its subsequent movements. No record of Messrs. Pinder or Lock appears in the British or Gibraltar Registers of Deaths.

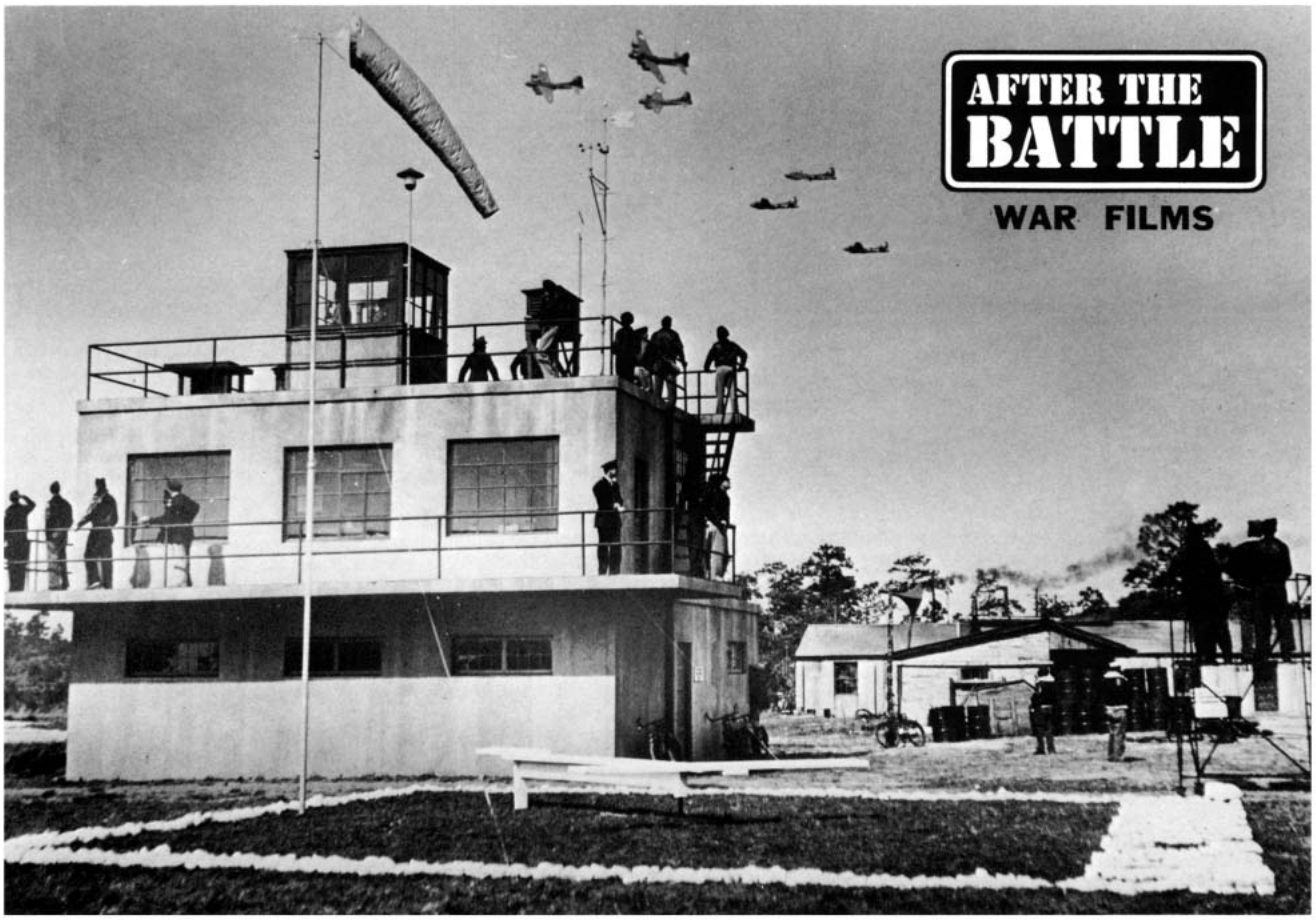
The Air Ministry's Inspector of Accidents, detailed to investigate the reason for the Sikorski crash, was Flight Lieutenant John Buck and we are indebted to him for providing the photographs reproduced here which he took of the wreckage of the Liberator AL523, including the picture of Liberator AL522, which was flown to Gibraltar to try to duplicate the locking of the elevator control which, according to the pilot's statement, caused the crash. After a thorough investigation of the wreckage on site Mr. Buck, now living in South Africa, tells us that he believed the wreckage was sent to England but no trace of it remains at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough where any subsequent tests would have been carried out.

Other relics from the accident recovered in 1943 — General Sikorski's uniform jacket found floating in the sea; his daughter's tunic found tangled around his legs and his cap picked up on the Spanish beach some days later — can now all be seen displayed in the Sikorski Museum at the Polish Institute at 20 Princes Gate, London.

Eighteen months after the crash, a brass memorial plaque was erected at the extreme south-eastern corner of the airfield runway on the nearest piece of dry land to where the General met his death. It was unveiled by the then-Governor of Gibraltar, Lieutenant-General Sir Ralph Eastwood on January 12, 1945. After the war, the inaccessibility of the plaque to interested visitors led to its removal and re-erection on the wall outside the entrance to RAF Station Headquarters in Devil's Tower Camp where it can still be seen today.

The remains of General Sikorski's cap beside his uniform jacket recovered from the sea.

Left: **The plaque unveiled on January 12, 1945 (IWM) has now been moved to the wall outside the entrance to the Royal Air Force Station Headquarters building** *(photo above).*



TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH

In one of the many beautifully co-ordinated scenes in the film, a group of B-17s break into a landing pattern over Eglin No. 3. All such ground-to-air shots were carefully directed by Henry King, using a radio from the ground.

BY JAMES H. FARMER

Twelve O'clock High is considered by many contemporary American film historians and critics to be a cinematic classic. Though the story is admittedly nostalgic 'with the agony and heroism carefully ordered by the passage of time', the film does capture, as does no other later effort about the Eighth Air Force, that highly perishable, transitory feeling for a specific moment in history. Whether the values implied in this film are considered valid today is not important, but rather that these values and inflections be true to the times that produced them.

Here I feel *Twelve O'clock High* must be judged an outstanding success. Evidence of this historical veracity is to be found visually throughout the film and is the result, in large part, of a studio production staff made up of key personnel who were themselves recent veterans of the Eighth Air Force. The careful blending of dramatic excellence with technical authenticity can directly be attributed to a veteran director/aviator who was thoroughly conversant with the demands of the script. However perhaps the most important ingredient, contributing to the film's critical and popular success, was a very unique writer who had earlier played a very important part in the initial formation of the organization whose make-up is at the heart of the story. It is a chronicle which is impassionately based on a rock-solid foundation of historical fact.

Combining all of these elements with a fortuitous timing (at the close of the post-World War II era) was to make *Twelve O'clock High* an aviation film classic—one of the most important productions of its time, and the recipient of four Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture.

THE BEGINNINGS

'There wouldn't have been any book and no screenplay except for Sy Bartlett,' recalls Beirne Lay Jr. 'He put me on the rack, forced me to write it. Right after the war I said that we didn't have a chance with a book about the war, but he was bound and determined that he was going to get this thing done.'

In 1946, Bartlett was working as a screen writer at Twentieth-Century Fox Studios during the day. Enlisting Lay's full-time aid, Bartlett worked with his new-found co-author at nights on a book he felt simply had to be written. As a Major in the US Army Air Forces during the recent war, Bartlett had struck up a great friendship with Colonel Frank A. Armstrong, Jr. As group commander of the 97th Bomb Group, Armstrong had led the first Eighth Air Force combat strike of the war to the Rouen-Sotteville marshalling yards. Later, on January 4, 1943, it was Armstrong who was sent to Thurleigh to take command and 'shape up' the battle-weary 306th Bomb Group (H). Less than four weeks later, Armstrong led the first American raid over Germany—the target (their secondary) was Wilhelmshaven. The five Eighth Air Force groups were led by the rejuvenated 306th.

So impressed had Bartlett been with this outstanding group commander, and the events which transpired at Thurleigh during January 1943, that he felt it had to be put on paper as a novel at the earliest opportunity. His central character, though known as 'General Savage', would be fashioned in large measure after Armstrong. His fictionalized bomb group, though identified as the '918th', at Lay's suggestion, was in fact fashioned after the 306th BG (3 x 306th BG = 918th BG).

Shortly after the war, Bartlett contacted Beirne Lay, Jr. Lay had himself been commander of the 487th Bomb Group, a B-24 unit, during the war and was an accomplished writer in his own right. His highly popular book *I Wanted Wings* had earlier been made into a successful film at Paramount Studios in 1941. In 1942, Lay was one of General Ira Eaker's 'original seven' who figured so prominently in the establishment of the Eighth Air Force. To Bartlett's thinking, Lay was a 'natural' to help write the book.

With the novel nearing publication, Louis D. 'Bud' Lighton, a producer at Fox Studios, became excited about the possibilities of adapting the story for production as a feature film. At Lighton's suggestion, and upon the basis of a brief synopsis, studio head Darryl F. Zanuck purchased the film rights.

Under Lighton's patient tutorage, Lay and Bartlett were contracted to do the screenplay. 'You would have thought it would be a breeze to write the screenplay when you had written the book—not so', says Lay. 'Bud Lighton, every inch of the way, made us justify and rejustify everything that went into it. He made us refine our central idea. Here Bartlett and I had written a whole novel, and we never adequately answered that question. He insisted that we establish this in a paragraph, or preferably in a line, or even four words.

'Well, Sy and I took nearly two weeks. We did get it down to four words—The Disintegration of Savage. Lighton then insisted that he didn't want one inch of film that did not contribute to telling that central idea. The key

The late Colonel Frank Armstrong after whom the character of General Frank Savage was largely fashioned. It was the Armstrong ordeal with the demoralized 306th Bomb Group in England during January 1943 which became the basis for the film. The fictionalized identity of the film's '918th Bomb Group' was created by Lay by simply multiplying 3 x 306th BG.

word was disintegration. The story was to tell of the forces that could tear a strong man apart. Savage was to be a very humane, warm-hearted, civil kind of a guy, saddled with the dirty, bloody job of sending nice young kids out to get killed. It was to be the tension between these two forces that would tear him apart.'

In time, Lighton was replaced by Zanuck on the project who later received sole credit as the film's producer, which never went down well with either of the film's writers.

With a draft of the script in hand, indeed with three different drafts in hand, the energetic Darryl F. Zanuck took over firm control of the production. Zanuck now tried to consolidate the much-belabored drafts into a more concise whole. After considerable effort and tiring of the chore, Zanuck called in director Henry King. He asked King to read the script. He told the veteran director: 'I'm getting tired of it. Take it if you want it—otherwise, I'll drop it.'

Despite its many flaws, King liked the script immediately. After scouting locations for the film, Sy Bartlett joined King at the Bacon's-by-the-Sea hotel in Florida where the two labored on the final draft of the script. By this time Beirne Lay was already at work on his next aviation film *Above and Beyond* at MGM. The efforts in Florida centered primarily upon deletion and curtailment of the over-length dialogue which hindered the story's movement and pace. Lay and Bartlett had earlier eliminated forty pages of script by removing the group commander's love interest. Zanuck had further tightened up the plot with the removal of all but the climatic combat sequence. Upon completion of the final draft King, an accomplished pilot in his own right, flew the script back to California. After reading it, King now recalls, Zanuck offered his congratulations and concluded by saying: 'Henry, this is the best script I've ever read.' It was a statement, King remembers, Zanuck used on more than one occasion when he was particularly pleased with a script.

THE PRE-PRODUCTION PLANNING

At the time King took over the picture the former P-38 field at Santa Maria, California was under consideration as a possible location site for the film. He, however, immediately eliminated this locale as being unsuitable to represent England, although it is interesting to note that twenty years later, Santa Maria Airport was the site for the filming of the low-budget Eighth Air Force yarn, *The Thousand Plane Raid.*

Lighton had originally envisaged a more modest production which would have been filmed, for the most part, on a Fox sound stage using exterior process projections of the Santa Maria Airfield as background. Though this would have saved the expense of an extended stay for the cast and crew on location, it clearly was not King's way of making a motion picture. Zanuck concurred and told King to go ahead and do the film 'as you want it and where you want it'.

In February 1949 King phoned the film's newly assigned technical advisor, Colonel John H. deRussy, at Maxwell AFB in Alabama. During World War II, deRussy had been Operations Officer of the Eighth Air Force's 305th Bomb Group in England.

'King called', deRussy now remembers, 'and asked if I had any thoughts on a stateside location similar to the Midlands bases in England. I suggested McGuire AFB in New Jersey. A few days later he flew there from Los Angeles and I flew in from Maxwell Field, Alabama. Henry King is an audacious pilot and holder of one of the earliest private pilot's licenses issued in the US. The flight he made from LA to McGuire, as told to me by the three passengers he carried, was an epic in endurance.'

Amongst King's exhausted passengers was the film's Location Manager, John W. Adams. Adams was another recent veteran of the Eighth. 'We had at first thought that we would go to England,' remembers Adams, 'but General 'Snuffy' Smith, then AF-PIO, told us there were no B-17s operational there. He suggested Alabama or Florida because the last operational B-17s were returning from Caribbean weather patrol and could be made available.'

From McGuire airfield, King's party and deRussy flew down to Eglin AFB in Florida. 'At Eglin', says deRussy, 'we got complete co-operation from General William E. Kepner, the commander of the Armament Center, which may have influenced the choice of Eglin No. 3 (Duke Field) somewhat.'

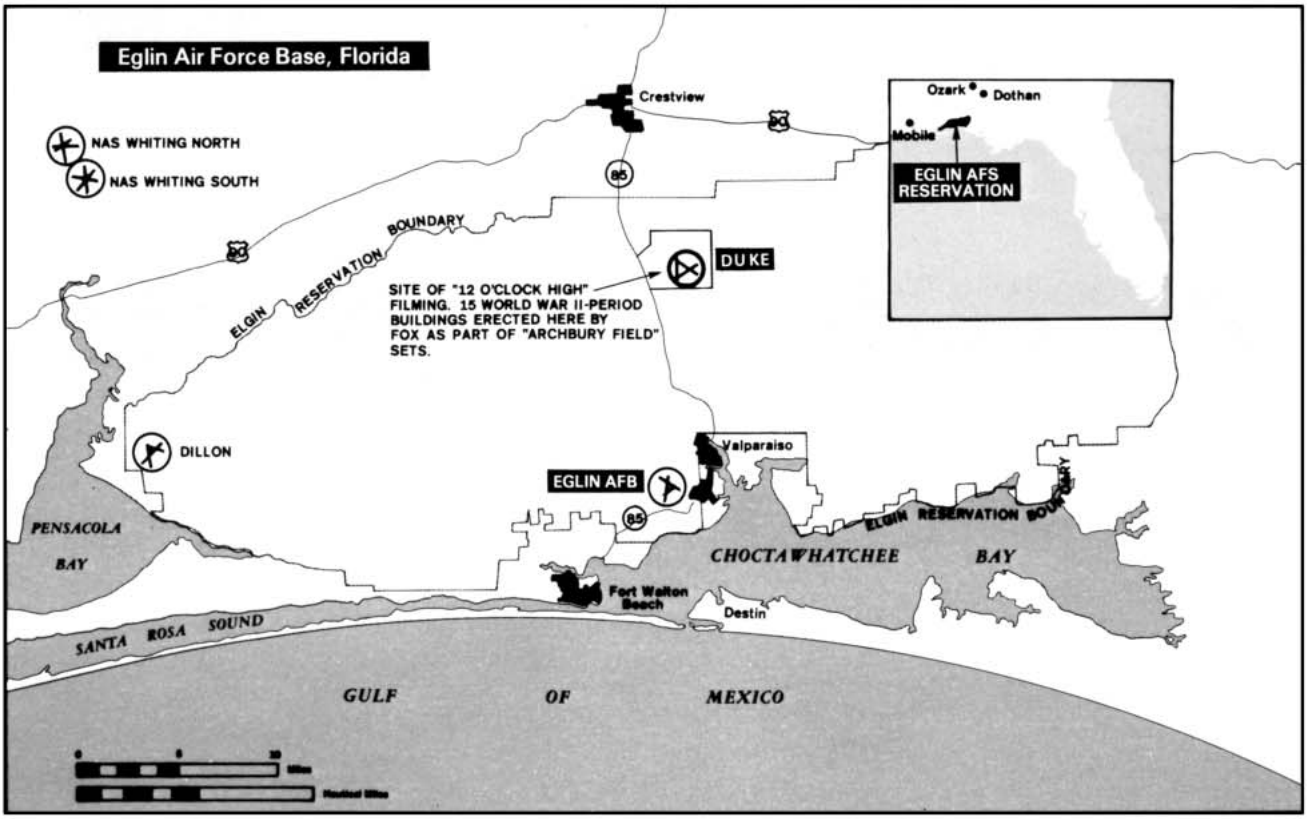
Adams recalls: 'We did not think Florida would look much like England, but flew down over Alabama and northwest Florida and discovered that the Dothan area (of Alabama) could pass as south-English countryside and that Eglin could be made to pass if we were careful about not featuring the pine trees.'

King and Adams agreed that the now-derelict Ozark AFB, a former wartime training field near Dothan, would do nicely for the opening scenes of the film which required an abandoned, overgrown English-type airfield. DeRussy adds: 'The selection of Ozark was made by locating abandoned AFB fields and then inspecting them to find a macadam runway overgrown with grass.'

A particularly favorite personal story of Henry King's involves his first inspection of Ozark. Prior to finding this location, King had spent a number of rather long days flying out of Eglin in his Bonanza 35, N-3206V, with his senior cameraman Leon Shamroy, John Adams and John deRussy, in search of an appropriate site for the opening scenes of the film.

'When I was searching for a suitable location for an abandoned airbase that had grown up in weeds', recalls King, 'I was flying across Alabama and had my cameraman with me. I saw from the air the Ozark airbase and it seemed deserted—it was closed. However, I landed there and, after looking around,

Gregory Peck (standing right), immersed in his role as General Frank Savage, poses with the flight crews of his 918th Bomb Group. As director Henry King brought less than two dozen professional actors from Hollywood, the bulk of the manpower used in these briefing room scenes were actually USAF personnel then assigned to the Eglin facility in Florida. This large quonset hut, constructed at Duke Field specifically for these scenes, was the only structure to survive the filming schedule.



decided it was exactly what I needed. The grass and weeds around the runway were several feet tall. I took off and went back to Eglin, to get permission to use this deserted base, only to learn that it was not an Air Force base at all, but an Army base. Had I remained on the ground at Ozark another ten minutes, I would have been placed under arrest for landing on a closed field without permission. The public relations department at Fox however, straightened this matter out and secured permission for us to use Ozark.'

Ozark was also to be the site for the take-off and landing shots seen at the beginning and end of the film. Being located across the state line, only some 95 miles north-east of the main base at Eglin, also made it possible to dispatch the fire trucks and ambulances required for such aircraft operations. The now-classic crash landing of the B-17 by Hollywood stunt pilot Paul Mantz was also to be filmed at Ozark. Except for a few tents, erected specifically for the crash scene, there were no structures built by the Fox technicians in Alabama.

This, however, was not the case at Eglin Auxiliary No. 3, Duke Field, in west Florida. Duke, which was given over entirely to the Fox crews during their stay there, was located approximately ten miles to the north of the main base. Its isolated position on the largest of US Air Force reservations, surrounded as it was by hunting preserves, together with its inactivity at the time, made it an ideal site for the location crew to set up shop. There, in March of 1949, they set about the reconstruction of a typical World-War-II-period English airfield—the type Adams had come to know so well five years earlier as an Eighth Air Force bomber pilot with the 445th Bomb Group. At Duke, art director Lou Bransford supervised the construction of fourteen brick and quonset buildings (Nissen huts) as well as an English-style control tower. A number of buildings already on the field also received new fronts for the duration of the filming schedule. The structures were then aged by the studio's prop department in order to give the sets a used or lived-in appearance. Interior shots of the briefing room, control tower and operations shack would also be shot in the working sets constructed at Eglin No. 3. These interiors were the cover sets should bad weather prevent filming out of doors for any length of time.

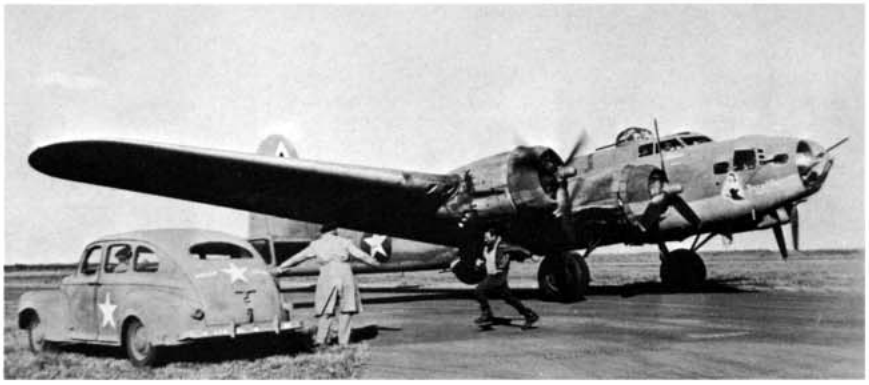
The Air Force loaned Fox a dozen B-17s, complete with crews, for the film. As many as six of these Flying Fortresses came directly from the First Experimental Guided Missile Group, later redesignated the 3205th Drone Group/Wing, based at Eglin's main field. While most of these 'G' model B-17s appeared externally to have retained their wartime configurations many had, in fact, been extensively modified internally for use on various Air Force research projects as drones (QB-17L/N) or drone director (DB-17P) aircraft. An additional four B-17s were acquired at the Mobile Air Depot at Brookley AFB in Alabama. A number of these latter Fortresses had been used as cloud sampling drones during the earliest of the post-war atom bomb tests—Operation Crossroads—at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific in July 1946. According to Colonel Harvey Lidden, the Eglin Base Maintenance Officer at the time, although these B-17s still showed evidence of the radioactive side-effects of these Bikini tests, the radiation levels were so low as to be almost negligible for the relatively short periods of time the aircraft were to be in use.

The last two of the twelve B-17s reportedly came from the storage facility at Roswell AFB in New Mexico. There does remain, however, some controversy among members of the surviving film crew as to the origins of the bomber used by Paul Mantz for the opening crash landing, King insisting that the aircraft was purchased from a private operator for the purpose while the balance of the crew, including deRussy and Lidden, maintain the B-17 had been flown in from Brookley.

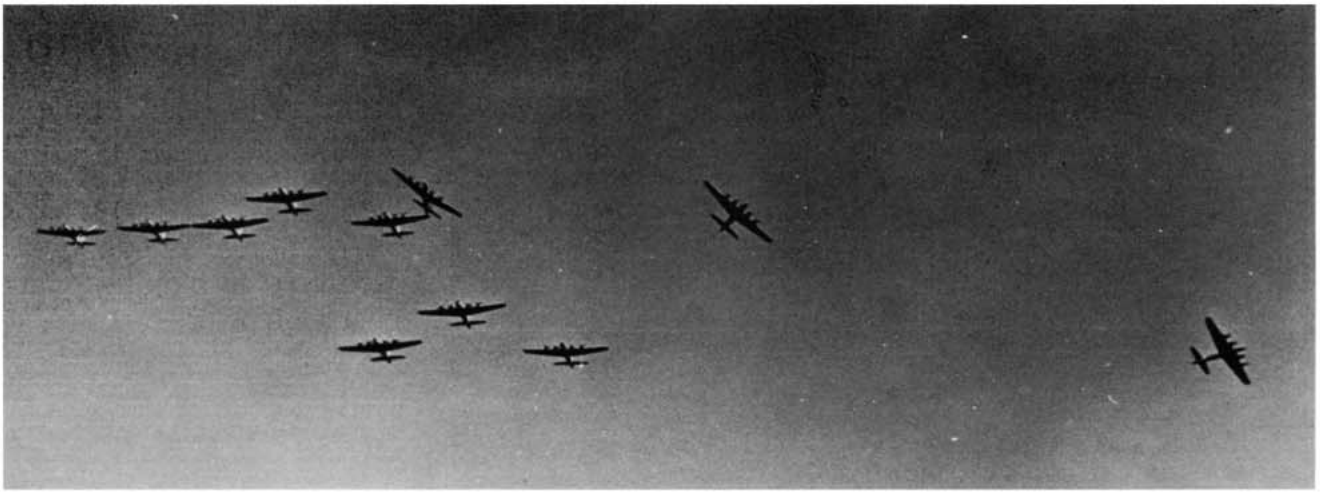
Back in California, Zanuck completed lining up his hand-picked all-male cast. A youthful Gregory Peck was chosen by Zanuck for the lead role of General Frank Savage. With some misgivings, the veteran film and stage actor Dean Jagger agreed to take on the important role of Major Harvey Stovall, the group's Ground Executive Officer. Gary Merrill was assigned the role of Colonel Keith Davenport, the likeable group CO that Savage would replace, while actor Hugh Marlowe played the part of the plot's pet whipping boy, air exec. Ben Gately who commanded the B-17 known as the *Leper Colony*.

THE FILMING BEGINS

With location manager John W. Adams' pre-production chores at Eglin now behind him, the shooting company of actors and



Film lead Gregory Peck quickly deplanes from 'Picadilly Lily' for this Alabama sequence.



Indeed a rare sight! Eleven of the twelve B-17Gs used in the film over Ozark AAF, Alabama during April 1949. The group was led in the air by the film's technical advisor, Colonel John deRussy, USAF. The occasion was perhaps the last time so large a formation of American Flying Fortresses would ever be seen airborne over their native soil. Most of the aircraft featured in the film were later destroyed as drones during the various armament testing programs being carried out at Eglin AFB, Florida during this period.

technicians, approximately 72 in all, began arriving in Florida on April 17.

During the first three weeks of their stay in the south-east, the cast and crew were constantly on the move, flying back and forth between Eglin and Ozark in a massive Delta Airlines DC-4 Adams had chartered for the occasion.

Among the first scenes shot at the Alabama locale during this early part of the filming schedule, was Jagger's post-war return to his former group's field at 'Archbury' with its overgrown fields and derelict runways seen in the opening moments of the film. Following this initial sequence, and the concluding sequel, the abandoned field was, to use King's words, 'policed up'. Its tall grass was cut and the runways generally made to appear operational once again. The flash-back was now complete.

The twelve Air Force B-17s, resplendent in their newly applied 91st Bomb Group markings, arrived at Ozark. As an experienced B-17 pilot and the ranking officer on the film, Colonel deRussy personally led the formation flights, group landings and take-offs seen throughout the picture, and filmed at Ozark.

One of the last scenes shot in Alabama, towards the end of the first week in May, was also one of the most conflict-ridden and dramatic to appear in the film. This was the famous B-17 belly-landing scene so skillfully flown by the controversial Hollywood film pilot Paul Mantz. Already a legend as a talented pilot and a shrewd businessman, he had earlier nearly caused cancellation of production. DeRussy explains: 'Upon learning that the Air Force intended to provide B-17s for this film, he (Mantz) wired USAF Headquarters threatening legal action because he had the capability of supplying the aircraft and crews to Twentieth-Century Fox. Indeed, the Air Force did consider withdrawing this support until the studio received a quote of cost from Mr. Mantz's company. Based on this estimate, they informed the Air Force that it would be monetarily impossible to complete the film without the Air Force aircraft. In view of this information, the Air Force decided to provide the aircraft support.

'Mr. Mantz's action in this instance did probably influence the Air Force in refusing to allow any USAF or USAF Reserve pilot to perform the belly-landing at Ozark. Mr. King had asked if I would fly the aircraft for this scene. Having observed many B-17 belly-landings during the war and having considerable B-17 flying experience, I had no qualms about doing it but considered it appropriate to request approval from Headquarters, USAF.

'This was denied vehemently and requests to permit other experienced Air Force pilots, including non-active duty reserves, were likewise refused. So Paul Mantz got the job.'

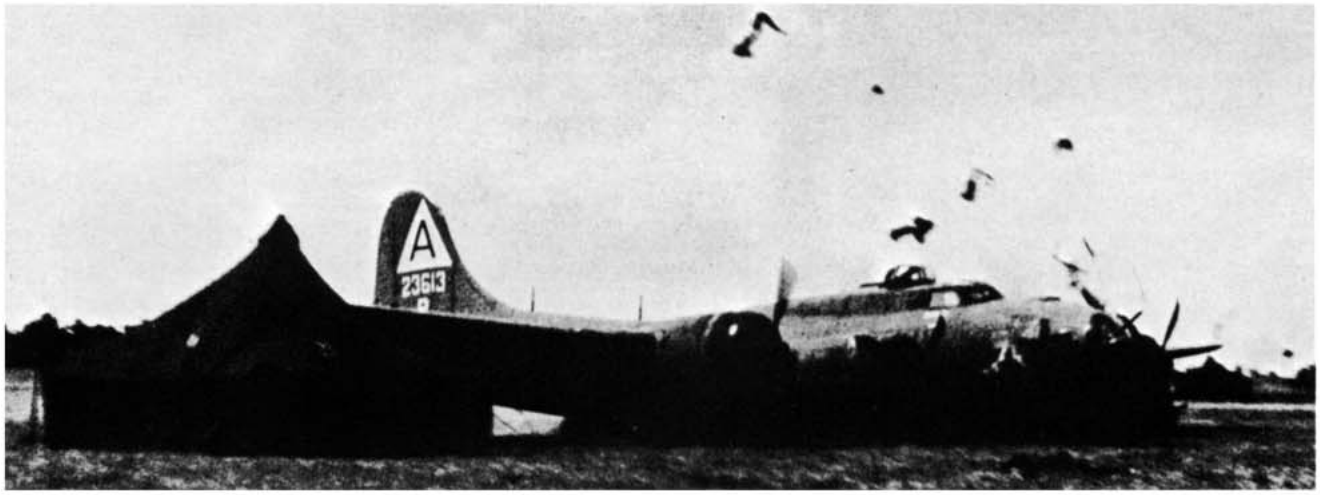
Originally Fox had hired Mantz only to film the air-to-air sequences of the production from his famed B-25 camera ship, *The Smasher*. However, prevented by the Air Force from using military personnel in the crash scene, King called Mantz in California. Mantz agreed to do the 'landing' for $5,000, but King thought the proposal was 'ridiculous' and replied, 'Hell, I'll do the scene myself for $2,500!' As a veteran pilot of some renown in his own right, King considered the stunt to be of little challenge for any experienced pilot. Having earlier been obligated to refuse a number of former Eighth Air Force pilots at Eglin (who offered to do the scene themselves for as little as a hundred dollars), King could hardly reconcile Mantz's demand for $5,000. Learning of King's response, Mantz replied, 'Hell, if Henry can do it for $2,500, so can I'.

King did respect Mantz's skill as a pilot, later reporting that Mantz set the giant bomber down within ten feet of the designated touch-down point.

With shooting at Ozark now completed, director Henry King pressed to finish out the balance of his location schedule at Duke Field. The weather was generally very favorable and good progress was made. It was, in fact, because of such good, dry Florida weather that cameraman Leon Shamroy often had to resort to the use of a fire hose to help simulate the damper English climate and resulting ground bogs!

Although the near isolation found at Duke made an ideal locale for the film crews to set

Stunt flyer Paul Mantz made his highly controversial '$2,500 belly-landing' at the former army training field at Ozark, Alabama. As the site of all the mass take-off and landing sequences in the film, Ozark was nearly a hundred miles removed from the main 'Archbury Field' sets constructed at Duke Field in Florida.



Cameraman Leon Shamroy (far left) captures the take-off roll of Fortress '23613' on location in Alabama. Within a few days of this scene, '23613' would conclude its flying career at the hands of Paul Mantz. Note runway area immediately about this late model B-17G has been hosed down to simulate the damper English climate.

back the clock for a few brief weeks, the impermanence of events was nonetheless very much in evidence. It could often be seen or heard intruding itself upon the otherwise tranquil skies over Eglin No. 3 and at the main base, some ten miles to the south, where the advanced armament and avionics testing of the mammoth new B-36 and B-47 jet bomber was proceeding at an ever-quickening pace. Not even the aging Flying Fortresses loaned to Fox by the Air Force could be looked upon with any conviction that here at least was some evidence of permanence from the recent past, for these proud machines would, themselves, soon be fodder for a whole new generation of ground-to-air and air-to-air missiles.

During the third week of May, with the location shooting schedule now completed, the cast and crew began packing for the return trip to California where they had another five weeks of planned studio work before the film would be completed. At Duke, the final task of the Fox technicians was to age the sets for one of the opening scenes in the film.

Fulfilling the contract made earlier with the Air Force by Adams, all of the recently-erected structures were removed by the studio with the exception of the large quonset hut constructed there for the briefing room scenes. This final 'Archbury' building continued to serve the Air Force for an additional three decades.

OPENING NIGHT

The filming of *Twelve O'clock High* was completed on July 1, 1949. When edited, the final cut of the film ran to 133 minutes. The result was a concise, sternly-edited statement of America's resolve in one of her most desperate hours, told with an authenticity seldom achieved by other films of this period.

The film was first premiered at Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood on Christmas Day 1949. A month later, on the night of January 26, 1950, the Air Force Association presented another Grand Invitational Premier at the Roxy Theater in New York City. Both John Adams and Colonel John deRussy were on hand for the earlier Hollywood premier. One particularly fond recollection of the evening is offered by Adams.

'At the premier, General Curtis LeMay, then Commanding General of the Strategic Air Command, sat at the pre-showing dinner with John (deRussy) and me. He remarked to John that he hoped all the usual technical goofs in air pictures had been avoided, but he doubted it. John and I said that, in our opinion, there was only one thing technically wrong but that we would bet he would not pick it up. He responded (in no uncertain terms) that he would indeed pick it up, whatever it was, and a half-a-dozen others in addition.

'After the showing, we returned to the hotel and asked the General where the technical error was. He said, "By God, there weren't any mistakes in the film, although I never would have believed it!" We then pointed out that to increase the dramatic effect of air combat, the whining sound of attacking fighters had been introduced into the combat scenes whereas, in reality, one could not hear fighters from inside a bomber! Obviously, the dramatic license had been successful!'

The film was an immediate success with both the American critics and audiences, and Bosley Crowther, the famed New York Times critic, observed: 'The saga of our Air Forces and their accomplishments in the recent war already has inspired a number of pictures . . . but there hasn't been one from Hollywood which could compare in rugged realism and punch to *Twelve O'clock High.* Except for a final situation, which appears both unlikely and contrived, the story has thorough integrity all the way down the line.' (Crowther's concluding negative observation refers to the final moments of the film in which Savage suffers a mental breakdown at planeside prior to a mission.)

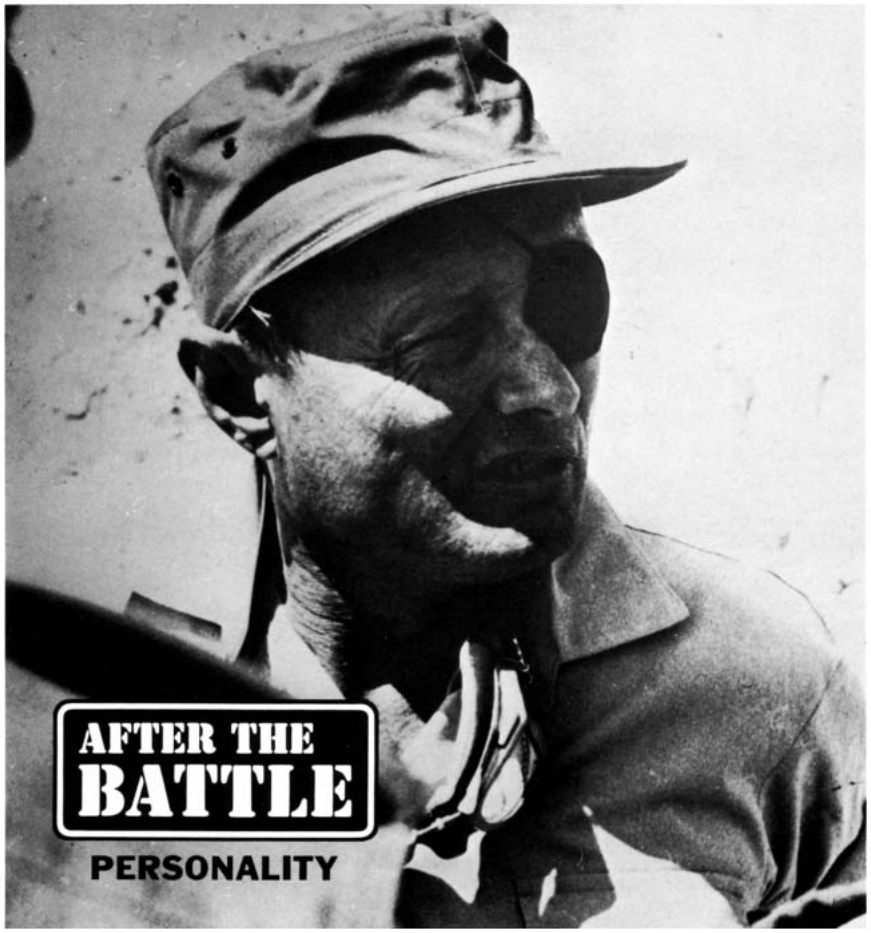
Of this criticism, co-author Beirne Lay replied that 'not only was it not contrived, it was the basis for the whole book. This incident happened identically as you saw it at the end of the picture to a very fine commander (not Armstrong) who had been on four rough missions in a row'. Mr. Lay does, however, concede to one point made by another reviewer who felt that 'Clinically, he didn't think that a flight surgeon would believe that a guy who had spent it all like Savage could come out of it as quickly as the character did at the end of the picture.'

Based, for the most part, on hard historical facts and given that special life and credibility at the hands of two talented writers who had been there, the film was nominated for four Academy Awards in January 1950. The nominations included best picture for the year 1949, Gregory Peck for best actor, Dean Jagger for best male supporting actor, and Thomas T. Moulton for the best sound recording. There was, however, some disappointment voiced at the time by a number of critics, among these Edwin Schallert, who felt a fifth nomination might have also gone to director Henry King.

Beirne Lay didn't see his film again for a great many years, but when he did he commented that he thought it stood up well. Bud Lighton used to say there is one adjective every film-maker hopes and prays might be associated with his film and that is 'unforgettable'. There are not many motion pictures that come in this category, but, he said that 'if there is even one scene in this picture that's unforgettable then we haven't wasted our time. If we strike one false note anywhere in this screenplay, all your work is down the drain because audiences aren't stupid and you've lost them. I thought when I saw it again that it retained your confidence from beginning to end.'

Perhaps Gregory Peck summed it up best: 'It is gratifying to be part of a film that is still being shown twenty-five years after we made it. I think the picture still has meaning for audiences because of its integrity. We managed to dramatize a true story without resorting to false theatrics and sentimentality.'

This writer has found that Twelve O'clock High is a film which is remembered fondly and with great enthusiasm by all of those individuals who played such an important role in its creation, and the author would like to express his profound thanks to the following individuals, without whose concern and gifts of time this article could not have been written: Mr. Beirne Lay, Jr.; Mr. Henry King; Mr. Gregory Peck; Colonel John deRussy; Mr. John Adams and Colonel Harvey Liddon.



Lieutenant General Moshe Dayan

General Moshe Dayan, at 63 now the Foreign Minister of Israel, has seen a long and varied military career. In 1908, his father emigrated from Kiev in Russia to Turkish-ruled Palestine, part of the Ottoman Empire, and, in 1911, he settled in Deganiah. Deganiah itself was the pioneer of the communal 'kibbutz' system of village life in which there would be no private property and all would receive according to their needs. Children, including the young Moshe born in 1915, were brought up in the communal creche which left the womenfolk free to engage in occupations normally the province of men.

Following the Allied victory in World War I, Palestine was governed by Britain under a League of Nations mandate. The British Mandatory authority, through its police force and troops, maintained order in the country. They were supposed to protect the citizens, but they were comparatively small forces and were unable — and often unwilling — to rush to the defence of Jewish settlements in danger. The British responded in some measure to the demands of the Jewish authorities for protection and allocated a few weapons to the kibbutzim. However, for the most part, they issued only shotguns, which were not very effective and declared as illegal the possession of unlicenced weapons and military training for self-defence. Therefore, in order to protect the settlements, a secret organisation, the Haganah, was formed by the Jewish leaders.

'In 1929, at the age of fourteen,' wrote Dayan later in his autobiography, 'I was initiated into this underground self-defence force of the Jews of Palestine. The Haganah decided to enroll us shortly after the Arab massacre of sixty-seven Jews in Hebron — men, women, and children. Sixty others were wounded in the Arab attack, synagogues were razed, and Torah scrolls burned. The Haganah was determined that isolated Jewish communities in town and country would never again be helpless, unarmed, or at the mercy of Arab extremists who could impose their will on Jews or Arabs friendly to their Jewish neighbours. Each community had to be able to defend itself. Each had to have arms and trained men and women. The Haganah therefore distributed its own weapons, which were hidden in a cache in each settlement. This was an illegal act, as was membership in the Haganah. Hence the secrecy.

'When we joined the Haganah, we received training in the use of firearms, though that was unnecessary in my case. There had always been a weapon in the house, an old German carbine which my father had brought with him from Deganiah. He kept the carbine wrapped up in the cowshed and I would often take out the gun to clean and oil it and had long ago learned to use it. But only now, with my cherished and secret membership in the Haganah, did I feel I might be using the carbine to good purpose.

'However my first serious involvement in the military arena occurred during my stay at Shimron and coincided with what the British called the "Arab Revolt," a reference to the Arab disturbances which started in May 1936 and harassed the country until May 1939, when Britain issued its new Palestine policy restricting Jewish immigration and land settlement. In those three years, the Jewish community struggled to preserve its security, and the younger generation was called upon to play an active part.

'The revolt began with an Arab general strike aimed at paralysing the economic life of the country. It soon developed into a terror movement by Arab extremists directed against the Jews, the Mandatory government, and the moderate Arabs. Britain rushed additional troops to Palestine to maintain order and, by the end of 1936, the main body of armed extremist groups had been neutralised, though sporadic terror continued and would flare up again later. By then a British Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel had been appointed to inquire into the causes of the conflict and to submit recommendation on future diplomacy.

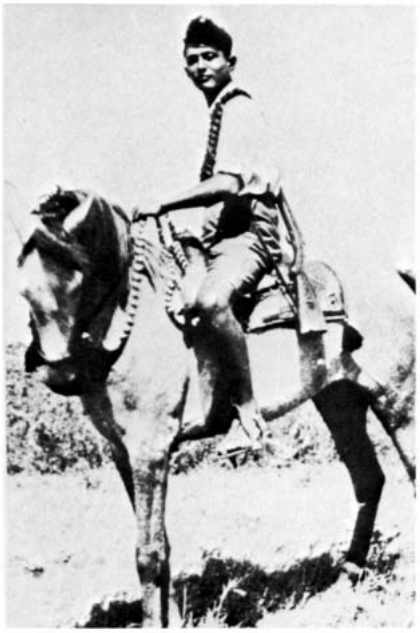
'Since the Jews and the British were both targets of Arab terrorism, the Mandatory government and the Jewish authorities found themselves working together. The first measure of co-operation followed a British army request for Jewish guides who knew the country and who spoke Arabic. It developed into the establishment of a Jewish Settlement Police Force as an auxiliary to the army and regular police. I became a *ghaffir,* a member of the supernumerary police.

'The first official military letter of appointment I ever received carried the letterhead of the Palestine Police Force. It was dated March 1937 and was addressed to me at Shimron. My salary came to eight Palestine pounds a month. I was then twenty-two. I served as a guide to British army units stationed at Afula, the rural centre of the Valley of Jezreel, on their patrols along the Iraq Petroleum Company oil pipeline.

'As a *ghaffir* I was given a uniform and a licenced weapon. I lived in a tent in a British army camp and got one night a week off as "home leave" to spend in Shimron. I worked with a Scottish regiment and the Yorkshire Fusiliers, who were not trained in reconnaissance. Their officers assumed that they had fulfilled their task if they simply showed their presence by patrolling the area. The Arabs could and did sabotage the pipline and set fire to the oil without interference either before or after the patrol had passed by. During the eight months I spent with the units in this sector, I came to realise the ineffectiveness of regular troops, using routine methods with fixed times and routes of patrol, against saboteurs who knew the terrain, moved stealthily on foot, could lose themselves in the local population, and could choose the convenient time and place for their operations. It became clear to me that the only way to fight them was to seize the initiative, attack them in their bases, and surprise them when they were on the move.

'The Jewish Settlement Police Force grew, served most of the kibbutzim and other farm villages, and included some 1,300 members of the Haganah by the end of 1936. After my service in Afula, I returned to Shimron as a *ghaffir,* was soon promoted to sergeant, and was appointed commander of a mobile guard. With six *ghaffirs* under my command and a light truck as our vehicle, we were very active, going on daylight patrols along dirt paths and setting ambushes at night on the roads leading from the Arab areas to Jewish settlements.

'In December 1937, the Haganah sent me on a Platoon Commanders' Course, and there I got to know Yitzhak Sadeh, the veteran underground officer, who served as one of the instructors. Though he was much older than I, he was a man after my own heart. Bursting with original ideas, he grasped the essence of a problem and demanded of us great daring, bordering at times on recklessness. It was a good course, with realistic battle exercises, and it meant much to me for having studied under Sadeh. I could not say the same about the school I went to next — a British course for sergeants held at a British military camp. I did not care for the highly-disciplined inspection parades with the strict insistence on shiny boots and smartness of dress and the content of the military instruction served no use whatsoever for ensuring the safety of the Nahalal region and the rest of the Jezreel Valley. Yet I found it interesting, and I



The teenage Moshe on his horse Tauka guarding the fields of Nahalal against marauding Arabs (IPPA).

realised that in order to run an empire, there may have been some virtue in the spit and polish of British army tradition.

'The co-operation between the Mandatory government and the Jewish authorities opened up extensive possibilities to improve and broaden our own military training. Licenced weapons for supernumeraries served as a cover for the possession of illegal arms. Furthermore, since I was in uniform and in command of a mobile patrol unit, it became easier for me, as for others, to carry out my clandestine Haganah activities.

'The Arab revolt flared up again in the autumn of 1937, when the Peel Inquiry Commission published its proposals. Its principal recommendation called for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state, and a British-mandated area. The Arab countries rejected this partition plan, and the Arab struggle against the Jews and the British administration grew in intensity.

'In 1938 I served as a Haganah instructor for Nahalal and the surrounding area and I also taught courses for section commanders at another Haganah base. In these courses, I tried to crystallise a method of training that went beyond the routine teaching of weaponry and drill. I wrote a manual called "Fieldcraft" on the importance of getting to know terrain and the correct tactical exploitation of its features. The manual also contained instructions on guarding, infiltration and an ambush as well as guidance on such 'minor' items as how to cut gaps in a fence. The manual came into the hands of Ya'akov Dori, the Haganah commander of the northern region, who summoned me to his headquarters and, to my delight and pride, praised me for it.

'In May 1939, Britain issued what was called a Government White Paper on Palestine, formulating a new policy for that mandated territory. It limited Jewish immigration for the next five years and virtually banned it thereafter; and it restricted Jewish purchase of land in extensive areas of the country. This was a reversal of the spirit of the Balfour Declaration, which had been issued in 1917, and the provisions of the League of Nations Mandate. If carried out, the new policy would doom the Jewish National Home. The Jewish community was up in arms, determined to resist the White Paper, and this reaction inevitably brought to an end the co-operation between the Haganah and the British administration and its security forces. Once again the Haganah went underground.

'In mid-August 1939, the Haganah started a Platoon Commanders' Course to which I was sent as an instructor in field tactics. Because of the suspected heightening of British vigilance, this course was held not in one of the regular Haganah training bases but near the village of Yavniel in Lower Galilee, about four miles west of Deganiah. For purposes of cover, the course was ostensibly an extended physical education programme under the auspices of a Jewish sports federation. The outbreak of World War Two, shortly after the course opened, gave an added urgency and importance to our military exercises. All went smoothly for the first seven weeks.

'The alarm bell rang on October 3, just as the trainees had gathered for a lecture. As we had no time to disperse, the lecture continued, with the subject switched from tactics to track running, and a few moments later two British security officers appeared at the entrance to the tent. They stood there listening for a while and then went off to search the other tents and huts. They had no difficulty in finding a few rifles beneath the mattresses and none in seeing through the "sports training" cover. They made a note of the arms they had discovered, recorded the innocuous answers we had given to their questions, and departed. The course commander promptly reported this to Haganah headquarters and was ordered to evacuate the camp.

'Unfortunately, we were late in departing. We had to assume that the camp was under surveillance, and it took care and time to gather up our main supply of arms, which had been secreted in various caches. It was 2.00 a.m. before we left. We climbed steep and difficult paths through the remaining hours of darkness, but daybreak found us still miles away from the nearest Jewish settlement. We were near the entrance to Wadi el-Bira, which was traversed by the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline.

'Suddenly a Transjordan Frontier Force patrol appeared and halted beside us. This force made up part of the British security units that operated in the two adjoining mandatory territories of Palestine and Transjordan. In answer to their question, we told the patrol that we were hikers, and Mordechai Sukenik even produced his firearms licence. They seemed satisfied and left. So did we. But not long afterwards they appeared again and made straight for us. Our weapons were removed and we waited several hours while their superiors presumably considered what was to be done with us. We were then put aboard two trucks and taken to the prison in Acre'

Dayan was accused of illegal possession of arms, an offence contravening the Emergency Regulations and brought to trial on October 25, 1939. Dayan's defence was that they were training to prepare themselves for the fight against the common enemy, Nazi Germany but, nevertheless, was found guilty after a three day trial and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. The sentence was reduced to five years the following month and in February 1940, Dayan was transferred to Mazra prison.

By January 1941 the prison was rife with speculation and rumour, Dayan later wrote that 'snippets of news and rumour of a change in the attitude of the British authorities toward the Palestinian Jewish community began reaching us. We heard the Jewish Agency and Zionist Organisation leaders had succeeded in persuading the military chiefs in London to expand the ranks of Palestinian Jewish volunteers to form additional units in the British army and that the British military command in the Middle East was much in favour of using the fighting services of the Jews of Palestine. We also heard that the army authorities were pressing the Ministry for Colonial Affairs, which was responsible for the Mandatory administration, to set us free and, on February 16, 1941, we were informed that we would be released the following morning.

After nearly eighteen months imprisonment, Dayan was freed. The news outside, however, was grim. In the Western Desert, Rommel's Axis forces had launched their second offensive and were advancing towards Egypt. In the north, French-mandated Syria, which included Lebanon, was under the control of the Vichy government and an attack from this direction was a distinct possibility. In this dangerous situation, the British administration in Palestine agreed to renew their acceptance of the help proffered by the Jewish Agency. More Jewish volunteers were accepted into Palestinian units of the British

Dayan in the foreground commands a mobile guard in 1937 as a member of the Jewish Settlement Police under the British Army (IPPA).

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army, and co-operation was renewed between the British authorities and the Haganah.

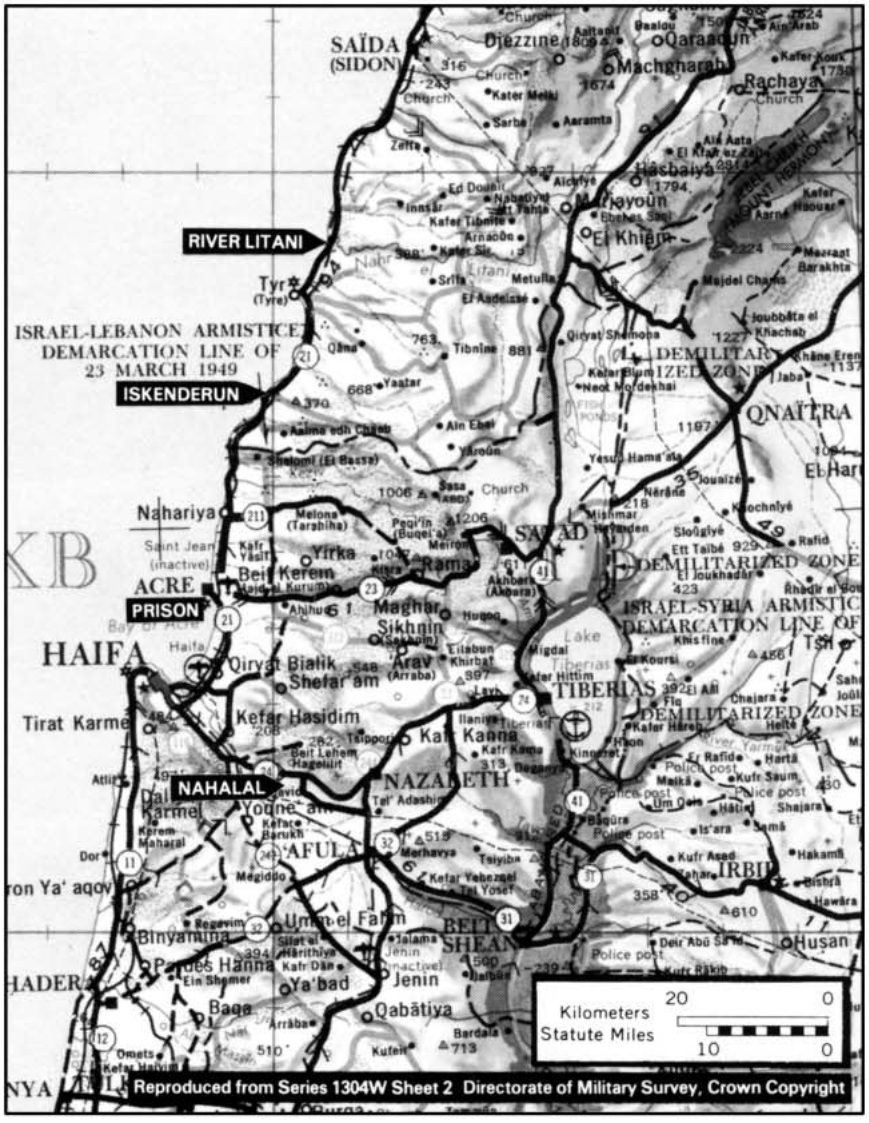
The result was the establishment by the Haganah of a country-wide force with the dual purpose of defending the Jewish community from Arab attack and assisting British units on special operations. Yitzhak Sadeh, one of the most colourful of the Haganah's top officers, was put in command of this force, and Yigal Allon and Dayan were made company commanders. They were given the immediate task of enlisting select volunteers from the Valley of Jezreel and Galilee.

'We soon learned that our special units would be serving with Allied formations in the invasion of Syria,' wrote Dayan, 'an operation designed to neutralise the threat from the north. Our men were expected to be familiar with the area of the northern frontier and would guide the advance of the Allied invasion force. My unit would constitute part of an Australian force which would spearhead the Allied invasion. Our task would be to undertake preliminary reconnaissance patrols to check the strength and locations of the enemy defences and to find subsidiary tracks of advance passable by motor vehicles since the main arteries were likely to be cut by the Vichy French. On the eve of the invasion, our mission would be to make an advance crossing of the border, proceed to the area of the village of Iskenderun (some six miles north of the present Israeli-Lebanese frontier) and seize and guard the nearby bridges that carried the main coastal highway to Beirut. The Australians feared the French would blow them up and thus delay the Allied advance. Sadeh told me that D-Day for the invasion was only about a week-and-a-half away.

'In that time I had to find men for the unit, brief, train and equip them, carry out patrols, and then go into action. Sadeh gave me the names of likely volunteers whom I could enlist, most of them from kibbutzim and moshavim in the Jezreel Valley. I sent a message to Kibbutz Hanita on the Lebanese border, which would be my base, and asked its members to make preparations for the arrival of thirty men. I then made a hurried reconnissance of the frontier. That done, and armed with the names given me by Sadeh, I drove from kibbutz to kibbutz to find the men on his list, informing them of the mission and telling them to report to Hanita within twenty-four hours. Rounding up the men took all night, but by the following evening all thirty were at the base. They were young and ready for action, but they were inexperienced and insufficiently trained. Only one knew Arabic, yet reconnoitring in Syria called for both a familiarity with the language and an idea of how to appear as an Arab. And only one knew how to drive, though one of our tasks was to find passable routes for vehicles. Few could use a machine gun, and only a handful had ever fired a rifle with live ammunition.

'It was important for us to succeed in our assignment, both for its contribution, however slight, toward the success of the overall operation and for the wider opportunities it might open up for increased participation by the Jews of Palestine in the war against Hitler. The British administration in Palestine had largely spurned Jewish volunteers who had sought to join the British army upon the outbreak of war. They were afraid this would drive the Arabs even further into the Nazi camp. They had eventually relented somewhat and allowed a restricted number of our men to join Palestinian units. (Only in 1944 did they agree to the establishment of a fighting Jewish Brigade.) It was largely the British military authorities who perceived the value of our aid in the invasion of Syria. But even they probably considered our participation as a one-time effort. For our part, we hoped that if we did well in this action, we would be used for further special operations. We therefore tried to enlarge our force. Even with my unit, for example, the Allies expected us to provide

In October 1939, 43 Haganah members were imprisoned by the British for the illegal possession of arms. Dayan (lying in foreground) is pictured with the group in Acre prison.



Being located in southern Lebanon after the 1948 cease-fire lines were established, the small village of Iskenderun has been inaccessible to Jews for thirty years. The advance of Israeli forces into Lebanon as far as the River Litani in March 1978 brought the area to the forefront of the news media throughout the world. The way would now seem clear for General Dayan to be able to make a return visit to the scene of his battle against the French in 1941.

only a handful of guides. We had recruited thirty but had been furnished by the British with only ten military guide certificates and only nine revolvers — with ammunition of the wrong calibre. We obtained four more with fifteen rounds each after much haggling.

'We overcame the weapons problem by securing arms from the Haganah's illegal arsenal. We overcame the training problem by getting two experienced Haganah officers who put the men through a concentrated crash course.

'We carried out intelligence patrols for a week. There were some narrow escapes, but all ended well and we gave the enemy little cause for suspicion. Our men got used to walking long distances over rough ground in the dark and became acquainted with the terrain on the Syrian side of the border.

'The invasion date was fixed for Saturday night, June 7 — our mission to advance to the Iskenderun bridges, silence the sentries, gain control, check for explosives and neutralise them if necessary, and defend the causeway until the arrival of the invasion force.

For this mission we would be a tiny unit, only five of our men, ten Australians — including three officers — and Rashid Taher, an Arab guide. Our weaponry was meagre, but it would prove sufficient. The Australians carried one machine gun, one sub-machine gun, and a few rifles and revolvers. We had a Tommy gun, semi-automatic pistols, a couple of rifles, and a few hand grenades. We set out at 9.30 p.m. in high spirits, feeling somehow that we were the entire Allied invasion force, instead of a puny handful of commandos, and glad at last to be on the job itself after the days and nights preparing for it. The moon was full, which made it easier to see where we were going but also easier to be spotted. We made a wide sweep across the mountains so as to reach our objective from an unexpected direction, marking our own steep and tortuous trails across the trackless slopes.

'We split the unit into two groups, one to tackle each bridge, and my group proceeded stealthily towards the northern bridge. We stopped a short distance away and waited. All was silent. Three of us then crawled to the bridge, Raschid Taher in the lead, myself just behind him, and one of the Australian officers, Kyffin, behind me. We found it unguarded and not prepared for demolition. This was also true of the other bridge.

'It was an anti-climax, but a great relief. After a week of patrolling, with little sleep, and after the tiring climb that night under the tension before an expected action, it was good to breath freely. Formally, our job was done, without firing a shot. The bridges were secure and all we needed to do was hold them until the arrival of the lead unit of the invasion force, which was due at 4.00 a.m. It was now just about two o'clock so we deployed for the defence of the bridges, and I then stretched out in the roadside ditch and went to sleep.

'I awoke to daylight. The sun had already risen, and there was a sound of firing in the distance. I looked around me and was uneasy. The invasion vanguard, which should have reached us before dawn, was nowhere to be seen. But we were very visible indeed — and likely to be attacked any moment. We were in an indefensible position, near the bridge in a deep valley, easy prey to anyone in the hills above.

'Rashid mentioned to me that there was a police station about a mile or so away, manned, he believed, by a few policemen. I thought we should try to seize the station before we ourselves were attacked. I put the suggestion to the Australians and they agreed. So we left a guard at the bridge, and the rest of us moved off to the police station. When we got close to it, we saw not policemen but troops in French uniform, and we promptly took shelter in an orange grove across the road from the two-story stone police station. The Frenchmen spotted us and opened fire. At the sound of shooting, other troops came out to the entrance to the station and joined their comrades in the sharp exchange of fire which ensued. Rashid turned out to be a courageous soldier and a first-class marksman. Taking accurate aim, he shot the Frenchmen who were trying to approach us under cover of the trees. We found some protection behind the low stone wall at the edge of the grove and kept up our shooting. But we were being pinned down by machine gun fire directed from the terrace of the building. Our ammunition was getting low, and the situation was desperate. Continuing to exchange shot for shot while we remained where we were would prove purposeless, indeed fatal. It would only exhaust our ammunition supply and render us unable to fight. The alternative was to storm the building.

During the 1948 Israeli War of Independence, Dayan was promoted to Commander of Jerusalem. He is pictured here at that time with his first wife Ruth (he remarried in 1973).

'I asked the men to provide covering fire for Zalman Mart (an experienced Haganah officer who was also doubling as a sergeant in the British-run supernumerary police) and me, and we dashed out of the grove and into the ditch across the road from the police station. From there I tossed a hand-grenade toward an open window through which we were being fired on but I missed and the grenade exploded outside. However, the noise must have disturbed the machine gunner, for he stopped firing for a few moments. In those moments we raced across the road, got close to the building, and from there I tossed my second and last grenade. This time it went through the window, and when it burst in the room, firing from the building ceased. Our unit rushed out to the assault and seized the station. The French surrendered.

'Their machine gun had not been damaged, and we quickly brought it up to the roof, as we were likely to be attacked by French reinforcements. It was not an ideal tactical position and there was little cover, but it served as an excellent observation point, and this was important. We also took over the rest of the French weapons and ammunition. These now included a mortar which had been located in the grove. We now had arms and ammunition in abundance and we organised ourselves for defence and awaited the arrival of the Allied advance unit. I took up position behind the machine gun on the roof.

'French reinforcements drew near and began to surround the building. I opened up with the machine gun and drew heavy fire in response. I took my field glasses to try and locate the source of the shooting. I had hardly got them into focus when a rifle bullet smashed into them, splintering a lens and the metal casing, which became embedded into the socket of my left eye. I immediately lost consciousness, but only for a moment. I came to and lay stretched on my back. I was also wounded in the hand.

'Mart soon came up to the roof, bandaged my eye and the damaged fingers with field dressings, and wrapped my face in a *kefieh*. I was then lowered in a makeshift stretcher of blankets to the ground floor, and there I lay, conscious all the time. Mart took my place on the machine gun but came down every so often to find out how I was doing and to report on what was happening. From then on, sightless, I followed the progress of the battle through my ears, from Mart's reports, though I must say it required a considerable effort to concentrate. We had no pain killers with us, and my head felt as if it were being pounded with sledge hammers without stop. Fearing that I might not survive the loss of blood, one of the Australian officers suggested that I be handed over to the French so that I could receive medical treatment before it was too late. I refused.

'Hours later, the lead Australian detachment of the invasion force reached us, having broken through or bypassed blocked or blasted stretches of the route. Together with two wounded Australian soldiers, I was put aboard one of the captured French trucks and driven south. It was an inordinately slow drive on a battered road and dirt-track bypasses, made even slower by having to contend with the invasion convoys moving in the opposite direction. At long last we reached Rosh Hanikra on the border where the field medical unit and assembly point for wounded was located. The British doctor who saw me thought it unwise to remove the bandages and ordered me off to hospital by ambulance.

'In the operating theatre in the Haifa hospital, the surgeon examined the wounds and praised Mart for not having removed the splinters of glass and metal that had lodged in

the eye socket. They had in fact served as a stopper and staunched the bleeding. I asked the doctor about my condition. "Two things are certain," he said. "You've lost an eye and you'll live. What is not clear is the condition of your head, with so many bits of glass and metal embedded in it."'

The wounds effectively curtailed further active military service by Dayan during the Second World War. However, by August 1941, he had recovered sufficiently to become the organiser of an intelligence-gathering communications network in conjunction with the British Intelligence Service in the Middle East. The scheme, known as 'Moshe Dayan's network,' was intended to operate as an underground unit if Palestine was captured and occupied by the Germans. While it operated under the auspices of the British, all the agents were Haganah members. By the end of August 1942, when the threat of German invasion had passed, the scheme was discontinued although Dayan remained in intelligence duties until the end of the war.

For the Jews in Palestine, the end of World War II, and the subsequent termination of the British Mandate, did not mean the end of the fighting for them. Arab states refused to accept the United Nations Partition Resolution of November 29, 1947 and announced that they would declare war on the Jewish state which was to be established in May 1948. Dayan had already been recalled for full intelligence duties, and, as a member of the General Staff of the Haganah, recruited agents to provide information on irregular Arab forces in Palestine.

The Arabs had already begun their sporadic attacks against Jewish settlements and Dayan's brother, Zorik, was killed on April 14 defending Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, east of Haifa. Dayan himself was anxious to leave intelligence work and, in spite of his part-blindness, take an active part in the battles and he was appointed to form a commando unit by the Haganah High Command. The 89th Commando Battalion was to be modelled on the Long Range Desert Patrols of World War II and the unit earned itself a distinguished reputation in the War of Independence, always being led into battle by Dayan personally. On July 23, 1948, Moshe Dayan was appointed Commander of Jerusalem, a post he still retained at the end of the war on January 7, 1949.

Dayan took part in the peace negotiations and, in October 1949, was promoted to Major-General and appointed GOC of the Israeli Southern Command, becoming the head of the Operations Branch of the General Staff on December 7, 1952 and Chief-of-Staff on December 6, 1953. Dayan remembers his understandable pride in becoming the number one soldier in the Israel Defence Forces; nevertheless he never lost his ability to mix with all ranks of the army and to see for himself, first hand, the problems facing his soldiers in the field.

'I started the change of style in my own office,' says Dayan. 'I abolished the post of aide-de-camp to the chief-of-staff and I took over his room as my office. I brought in the field table covered by a khaki blanket and a glass top which I had used when I was head of Operations. I turned the large, well-furnished room which had been the office of the chief-of-staff, with its massive table and upholstered chairs, into a conference room. I wanted the field commanders who came to see me to feel that they had come to the headquarters of a higher command which was not very different and not cut off from their own. When I inspected units in the field, I wore fatigues, sat on the ground with the troops, got dirty and dusty together with them.'

As Chief-of-Staff, Major-General Dayan played a key part in the secret negotiations with the British and French Governments in planning the surprise attack on Egypt which was launched by Israeli forces on October 29, 1956. Israel, struggling for its survival as an independent state, had no illusions as to what it was fighting for but Britain and France, faced with worldwide hostile opposition led by both the United States and the Soviet Union (the latter in the middle of suppressing the Hungarian revolt), were forced to back down.

Following the official termination of the Sinai Campaign (March 16, 1957), Dayan reached the end of his term of office as Chief-of-Staff and he returned to civilian life to become a student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Two years later, he was elected a Member of the Knesset for the Mapai Party becoming Minister of Agriculture. Although re-elected in August 1961, Dayan resigned from the government in November 1964.

Out of office, by 1966 it had been ten years since Dayan had been closely involved with military matters, ten years as he recalls 'since I had been at the wrong end of an enemy tank, field gun and attack plane — and the right end of our own.' Technology had come a long way in that time and he wanted to see for himself what modern war was like, how the new weaponry was handled and whether it could be adapted for Israeli use.

The only place where the necessary experience could be had at that time was south-east Asia and, agreeing to write some newspaper articles in order to be accredited as a war correspondent, he set out for Vietnam. Early in August 1966, Dayan was hosted by the 1st US Air Cavalry Division.

Dayan spent several days seeing how the American forces coped with movement in the jungle and was impressed with the important role of the helicopter in modern warfare. He also had an opportunity to visit a defence position recently attacked by the Vietcong. Dayan left the area with a sobering thought: the American support units in defence had fired 21,000 shells along a 200-yard-wide strip between the position and the jungle — more than the whole Israeli army had fired during the 1948 War of Independence *and* the 1956 Sinai Campaign!

It was during the build up to the 1967 'Six-Day War' that Dayan's experience as a combat soldier was acknowledged and on June 1, in Israel's hour of need, he was recalled to the Government as Minister of Defence. It was a direct result of his own ideas, his belief in surprise and in gaining the initiative that Israel launched her pre-emptive attack against Egypt on June 5, 1967. By the end of the first day, 70 per cent of the Arab air forces had been destroyed and by the end of the second, the Egyptians had begun to retreat. That same day Israeli forces occupied the strategic Sharm el-Sheikh and lifted the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba.

One immediate effect of the Israeli victory was the reunification of Jerusalem and on the first Saturday after the war ended, Dayan visited the Mosque of El Aksa — the Moslem place of worship built on the site of the Jewish Temple of Biblical times.

Although Minister of Defence, Dayan still insisted that his visits to army units were to be carried out without pomp or ceremony. 'I was never greeted with a guard of honour,' says Dayan. 'When I had issued orders abolishing this practice, I was told it would endanger discipline and that it was unthinkable for the army to receive the minister, the chief-of-staff, the regional commanders and the air and naval commanders without an honour guard.

In the autumn of 1966, Moshe Dayan, then a private citizen, visited Vietnam as a newspaper correspondent (IPPA).

I did not argue about holding parades for the others. I did not feel disposed to lay down principles of discipline or routine forms which are said to mould the character of the soldier and his combat capability. I had never rejected nor had I been enthusiastic about parade-ground drill and the shouting of sergeant-majors. I therefore said that honour guards would be cancelled only as far as I was concerned. When I went to an army camp, it was to visit the unit, to meet with the troops and to consult with the officers, not to force the men into a frantic spit-and-polish scramble for the visiting dignitary. And that became the rule for my visits.

'I cannot claim to be well dressed or to wear clothes that are always well pressed, particularly when I emerged after a nap in the back of my car. However my weaknesses were a shaved face and polished boots. The first thing I did in the office after returning from a field trip was shower, shave, and polish my boots. I considered myself something of an expert at polishing, having acquired the skill from my British sergeant when I was a supernumerary policeman in Nahalal forty years ago! He taught me to rub a film of whitewash on my boots before applying the polish, so as to get rid of the grease and, indeed, it produced a brilliant shine with my face reflected twice from my toecaps. Perhaps I enjoyed this pastime because it subconsciously took me back to the world of my youth. The real reason, I think, was that it gave me a few minutes to myself, which I so much needed and so much lacked.'

During the years up to 1973, Dayan, as the responsible minister, was largely concerned in the development of the advanced weaponry required for the armed forces by Israel itself as the country faced an arms embargo by those nations which could supply the items required off the shelf. Locally produced weapons included the Kfir attack plane, the Shafrir air-to-air missile, the Reshef missile boat, the Gabriel sea-to-sea missile, mobile medium artillery and long-range guns as well as air-to-ground missiles and other ammunition.

General Dayan was still in the post of Minister of Defence when, on October 6, 1963, the alarm was given of imminent attacks by Egypt and Syria. This time Dayan had to bow to the political implications of launching a pre-emptive strike because of the danger of losing the full support of the United States. With his hands tied, the enemy would have to be seen to make the first move. Nevertheless instructions were issued to re-deploy the available forces already on a 'C' alert, the highest state of readiness possible.

The defence of Israel always depends on the mobilisation of reservists and the first shots of the Yom Kippur War therefore found the Israel Defence Forces at less than full strength. The Egyptian army fielded 100,000 men and the Syrians 45,000; to counter these forces, the Israelis could only muster, at the outset, 8,500 and 5,000 men respectively. Israel was also outnumbered in tanks and field guns by up to 10:1. Despite the grave disparity in numbers, by midnight on the first day, both Northern and Southern Commands estimated that they were beginning to contain the enemy assaults. Within four days the tide had turned and the Syrians had begun to retreat in the north and five days later, Israeli forces were crossing the Suez Canal to envelop the Egyptians from the rear. By the evening of October 23, the Egyptian Third Army had been encircled and, with the war lost, both Arab countries were pressing for a cease fire.

Israel's extraordinary accomplishment in the Yom Kippur War lay in her capacity to move over to the offensive in so short a time and the fact that this was done against the massive superiority of the Arab forces was nothing short of a miracle.

There are also these startling factors to consider. More weapons were involved and the fire was more intense over short fronts and in brief periods of time in this battle than in any other campaign, at any time, anywhere in the world. In World War II, the French had 2,000 tanks in their main defence line, the Maginot line. The Germans attacked with 3,000 tanks. At El Alamein, in the Western Desert, Montgomery had 1,030 tanks and Rommel about 600. In the Yom Kippur War, the Arabs attacked with more than 5,500 tanks. On the Suez front, the Egyptians used double the number of tanks employed by Montgomery and, in the north, the Syrians attacked with a force equal to that which Germany sent against France. Both attacks were carried out simultaneously, with the most sophisticated types of tanks, and on extremely short fronts. Also the efficiency of the tanks of both sides in the Yom Kippur War was ten times greater than that of the armour in World War II and double that of the American forces in Korea. In the Second World War, there was only one chance out of 20 of a Sherman tank hitting an enemy tank with its first shot at a range of a mile. In Korea, the chances were one out of three. In the Yom Kippur War, the chances were seven out of ten. The tanks were therefore destroyed at a greater rate and within a shorter time than in any other war. The Arabs lost more tanks than the United States has currently stationed in Europe.

With Chief-of-Staff Yitzhak Rabin (right) and the GOC Central Command Uzi Narkiss (left), General Dayan, then Israeli Defence Minister, enters the Old City of Jerusalem shortly after its liberation in the Six Day War of 1967 (Israel Government Press Office).

In spite of the fact that Dayan was Minister of the Israeli Defence Forces, not only in their greatest triumph but in the most spectacular military victory the world has ever seen, it was not considered in this light by many in Israel. As a result, a commission of inquiry, the Agranat Commission, was set up to apportion the blame for the initial failure of the Intelligence Service to provide adequate warning of the Arab attack and the unreadiness of the Israeli defences in the opening stages of the battle. In March 1974 the Commission issued its 'Partial Report' and the necessary heads began to roll: four from the Intelligence branches, the GOC of Southern Command and the Chief-of-Staff. Although General Dayan was officially exonerated from personal blame, widespread public criticism forced his resignation.

Today, General Dayan is back in office having been appointed Foreign Minister in Mr. Menachem Begin's Likud Government in May 1977.

MONTY'S WARTIME CARAVANS

On March 24, 1976, Field-Marshal Lord Montgomery died at his home at Isington Mill, Hampshire where he had lived since his retirement from active Army life. In the grounds stood a huge barn given to the Field-Marshal jointly by the Australian Government (the walls) and the Government of Canada (the roof). There Montgomery housed his three wartime caravans in which he had lived and worked throughout the North African and European campaigns.

The Bergonzoli caravan was the first to have been acquired by the then-General Montgomery when he took over command of the Eighth Army from Lieutenant-General N. M. Ritchie. Ritchie had commandeered it from Generale di Corpo d'Armata Annibale 'Electric Whiskers' Bergonzoli, Commander of the Italian 23rd Corps, at Beda Fromm, south of Benghazi in February 1941. It was then mounted on a Lancia chassis but this was removed and the body installed instead on a British-made Leyland chassis.

Initially the caravan was used by General Montgomery as his personal quarters from August 1942 until the end of the North African campaign in May the following year. Winston Churchill used it in August 1942 at El Alamein and again in February 1943 at Tripoli.

In May 1943, Monty acquired a second caravan from the Italians and the Bergonzoli caravan was then converted into an office, being fitted out with cupboards, a desk and a couch which could double as an emergency bed. This is the most-photographed of the three caravans, being the one with the portraits of the four German commanders who were Montgomery's principal opponents — Rommel, Kesselring, Model and von Rundstedt. Monty said that, 'I used to look at the photograph of the General I was up against at the moment and try to decide what sort of person he was and how he was likely to react to any moves I might make against him. In some curious way, this helped me in the battle.'

This was also the caravan in which Monty pinned up three quotations following the Battle of Alam Halfa, a victory which he termed 'the turning point in the desert war':

Prayer of Sir Francis Drake on the morning of the attack on Cadiz
1587

O Lord God, when thou givest to Thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same, until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory.

James Graham, Marquis of Montrose
1612-1650

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dare not put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all.

Henry V, Act IV, Scene I

O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts.

Above: **Normandy, June 12, 1944. Prime Minister Winston Churchill with Field-Marshal Alanbrooke and General Smuts (General Dempsey censored out on the left), stand in front of the Bergonzoli caravan L4410754 (IWM).** *Right:* **The interior of the caravan during the European campaign (IWM) and,** *below,* **as preserved by Lord Montgomery after the war (Sunday Times).**

Left: **Personnel of No. 12 Driver Training Regiment, RCT, winch the Bergonzoli caravan onto a low-loader in the lane outside the mill prior to restoration at Aldershot. The caravan bears a later army registration but when delivered to the Imperial War Museum** *(photo right)* **its original number had been replaced (IWM).**

The General on the steps of the Bergonzoli caravan talks to war correspondents at Vasto, Italy in December 1943 (IWM).

The second caravan, which Montgomery acquired in May 1943, was a similar Italian-built van mounted on a Lancia chassis, and was captured from Maresciallo Giovanni Messe, Commander of the First Italian Army during the final stages of the battle in Tunisia. Messe had taken over from Rommel in the overall command of the Axis forces and he told Montgomery that the caravan had once belonged to the German commander.

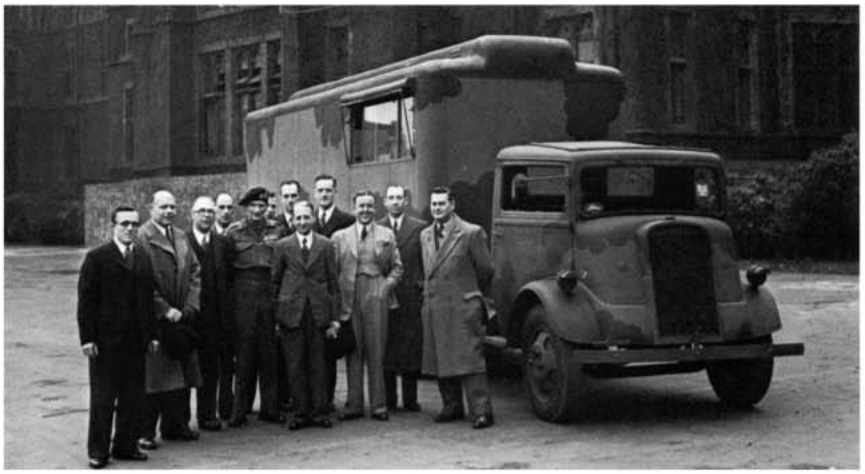
The caravan was converted into sleeping quarters, equipped with a bed, wardrobes, washbasin and bath, and installed on an American Mack chassis, the work being carried out in Tripoli. According to Monty, 'I would turn out of this caravan only for two people: The King — George VI — and Winston Churchill.'

During the North African campaign, and those that followed in Sicily and Italy, the General realised he had a need for a third caravan which could be used as a mobile map room for briefings etc. Subsequent to his appointment as Land Forces Commander for the invasion of Europe, Montgomery's staff approached the British Trailer Company Ltd., Trafford Park, Manchester, in January 1944, with a specification for an articulated map caravan. The design called for most of the walls to be taken up with maps, with telephones to enable Monty speak to his subordinates while consulting the current battle situation, plotted by his staff on plastic map overlays. Blackout curtains were installed to enable conferences to continue after dark as it was in this caravan that the General would receive the reports of his team of young liaison officers. An extract fan over the door was provided for ventilation for the heat build up from the intensive lighting and another for air circulation.

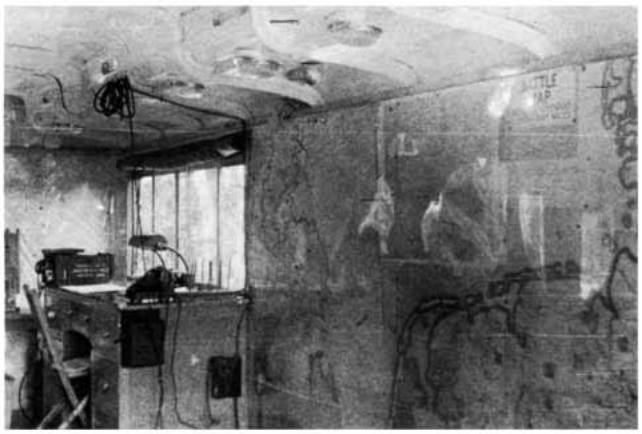
The vehicle was completed within three months and presented to him as a gift on April 17, 1944 at St. Paul's School in Hammersmith, Monty having characteristically chosen his own school for his pre-D-Day headquarters. His personal office was that of his former headmaster. Meanwhile the two Italian caravans were put on public display, first in Birmingham from March 25-April 15 and subsequently at Clarence House, London from May 1-10.

By the evening of D-1, all three caravans, which would form part of General Montgomery's Tactical Headquarters, had been

Above: **Monty's Birds! Major Keating photographed General Montgomery on November 24, 1943 posing with canaries and love birds collected in Sicily and Italy beside the caravan captured from Maresciallo Giovanni Messe, L1308619 (IWM).** *Below:* **Watched by Monty's son, The Right Honourable The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, the Messe caravan emerges from the barn in July 1976 (IWM).**



The map trailer being handed over by members of the staff of the British Trailer Company responsible for its construction. Photo taken at St. Pauls School, April 17, 1944 (IWM).



Above left: **The interior of the map caravan photographed during the Second World War and** *(right)* **as it is restored on display at the Imperial War Museum at Lambeth (IWM).**

loaded on board a landing ship ready to be transported to France. By June 8, Monty was able to join them in their first continental location parked in the grounds of Creuilly chateau four miles inland, situated on the dividing line between Gold and Juno beaches.

Over the next eleven months, the TAC HQ of 21 Army Group, including the three caravans, was moved 26 times as the fighting progressed across France, Belgium and Holland and into Germany. By the beginning of May 1945, the caravans were parked on a hilltop near the little north German village of Wendisch Evern and it was here that the surrender of German forces in north-west Europe was signed on May 4, 1945. An army tent was used for the signing ceremony although, previously, General-Admiral Hans von Friedeburg had had a discussion with Field-Marshal Montgomery in one of the caravans, most probably the Bergonzoli one.

The caravans were taken on to Berlin by Montgomery and, when he took over the appointment Chief of the Imperial General Staff in June 1946, the caravans returned to the UK. Not having a permanent home in Britain, Montgomery continued to use them while parked in the garden of a friend at Hindhead until they were moved to the barn at Isington Mill.

'The question then arose,' dictated Montgomery on a tape recorded for posterity on September 3, 1970, 'who owned these caravans? I said they belonged to me; two were captured in battle and one was given to me by the British Trailer Company Ltd. The War Office did not agree and a file was opened on the subject. It was finally agreed that they were mine during my life. I then said that on my death they would all three be given to the Imperial War Museum and this was agreed.'

Four months after Lord Montgomery died, the three caravans were removed from the barn by No. 12 Driver Training Regiment, Royal Corps of Transport and moved by low-loader to Aldershot where restoration of the bodywork, mechanical parts and external fittings was carried out by 43 Command Workshop, REME.

The restoration continued during the summer and, on October 28, 1976, the caravans were handed over to the Imperial War Museum by the Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Army, Mr. Robert Crofton Brown, MP. The three caravans were drawn up on the front lawn of the Museum for the handing over ceremony which was marred only by continual rain.

After several months work by museum staff to restore the interiors as they were at the end of the war, the caravans were installed in the public galleries and inaugurated by the late-Field-Marshal's son David on July 20, 1977. The display was completed with the addition of appropriate photographs and other Monty memorabilia: a 25-pdr. gun used in the Western Desert in 1942, the Field-Marshal's battledress tunic and black beret and the

Above: **Soldiers gently ease the Field-Marshal's BTC map lorry from out of the barn where it had been stored for thirty years (IWM).**

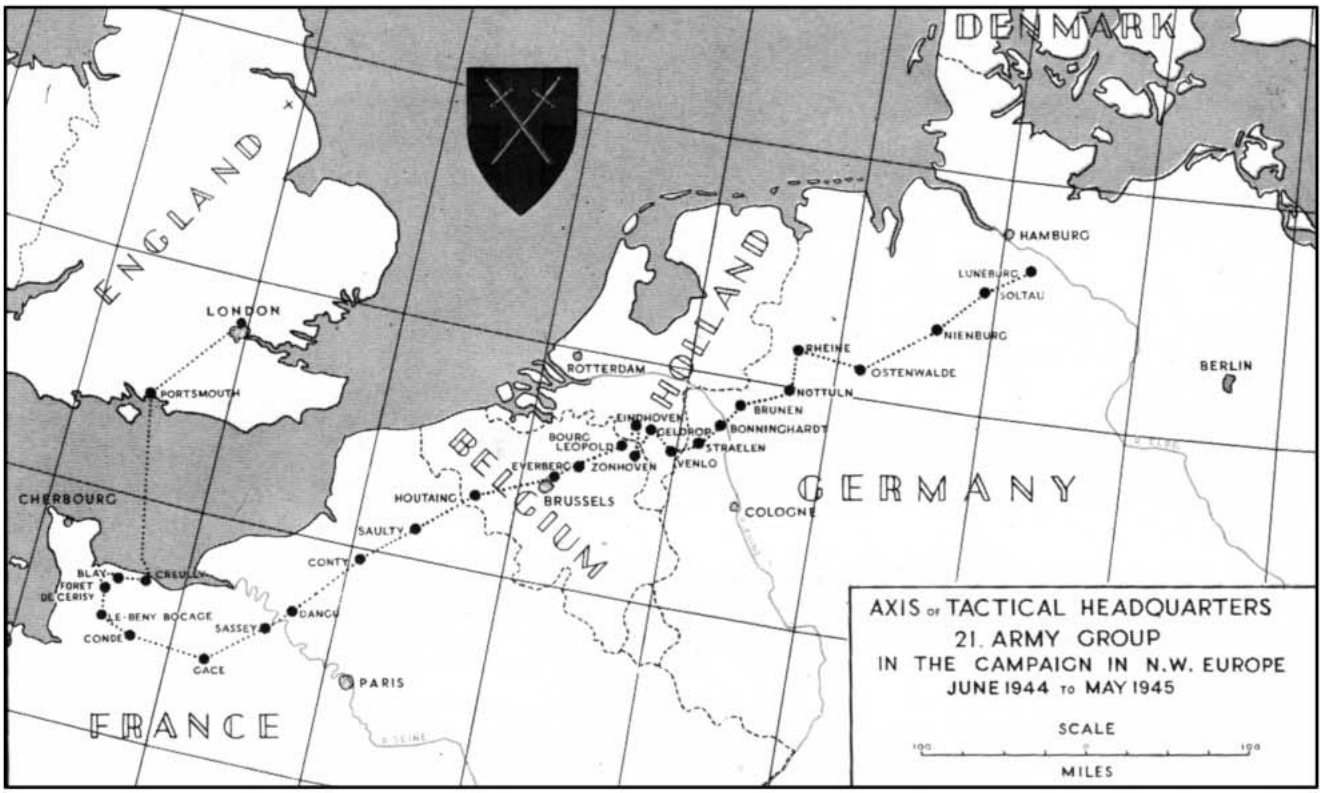
Museum's copy of the Instrument of Surrender. The final touch to an historic display is given to visitors by a tape-recorded description of the history of the caravans by Monty himself: 'In years to come, historians and scholars will learn with interest how the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in the field lived during the war against Hitler's

Above: **Nicely restored, the map caravan positioned outside the museum on October 28, 1976 in readiness for the handing over ceremony (IWM).**

Germany and will be able to see the map lorry from which he conducted operations of great armies of over one million men.'

THE FIRST . . .

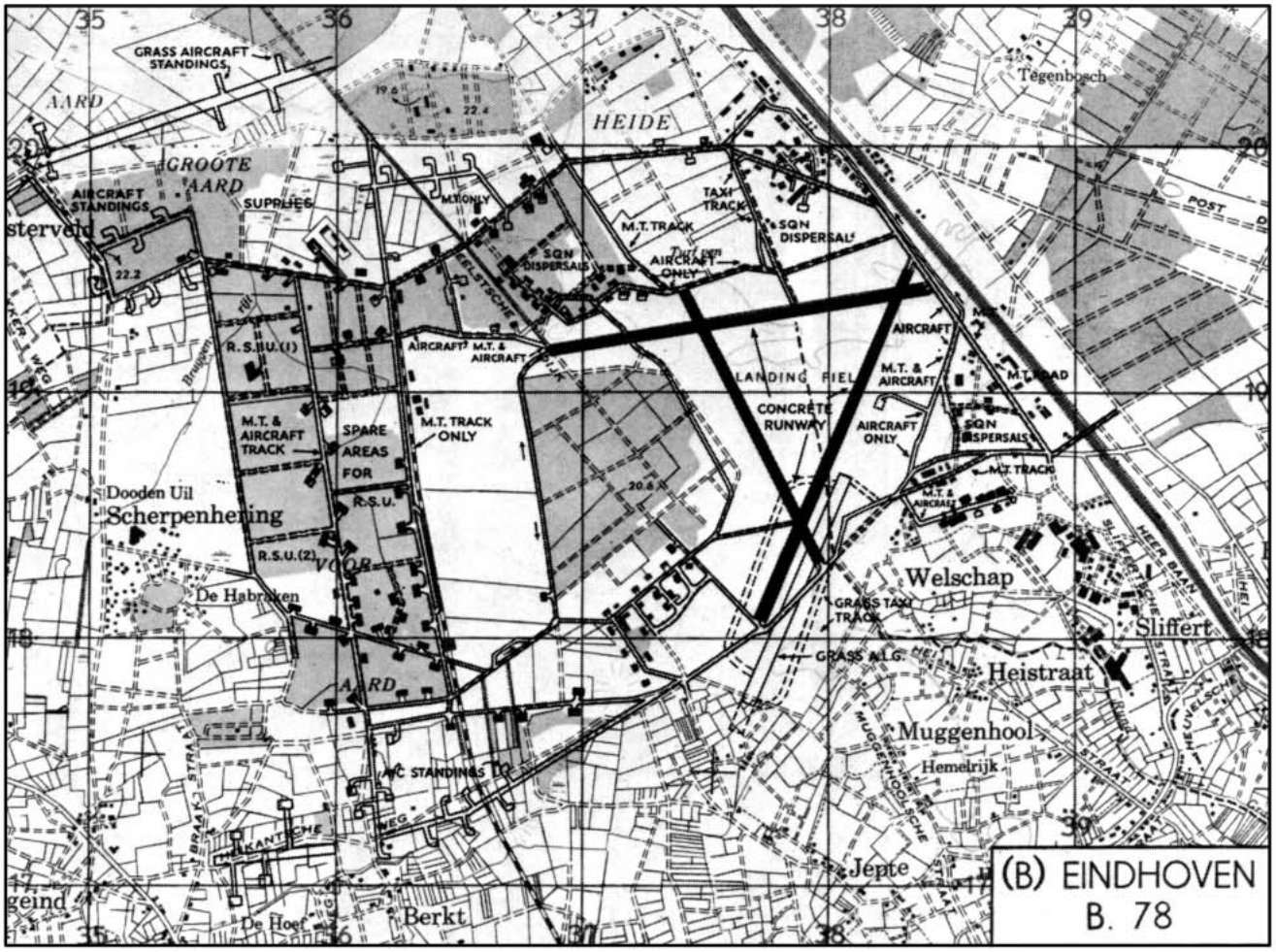
Above left: **First continental location for the caravans was the lawn behind the chateau at Creuilly. The Messe caravan is visible in this shot of General de Gaulle visiting Monty's TAC HQ on June 14, 1944 (IWM).** *Right:* **One autumn day thirty two years later.**



Below left: **Feldmarschal Busch at Monty's last European TAC HQ near the village of Wendisch Evern on the Timeloberg — renamed by the Field-Marshal Victory Hill (IWM).** *Below right:* **May 4, 1975 exactly thirty years later.**

. . . AND THE LAST

Eindhoven airfield photographed by No. 541 Squadron, RAF, on January 5, 1945 (Crown Copyright via Keele University). Because of its use by the present-day Dutch Air Force, a modern comparison aerial photograph could not be supplied to us.



At the beginning of September, 1944, the Second British Army advancing into Holland was supported by 83 Group, Royal Air Force, based on airfields in the Antwerp-Diest-Brussels area. Following the anticipated success of Operation Market Garden (the airborne seizure of bridges at Eindhoven, Nijmegan and Arnhem), it was planned to construct six or eight airfields north of Arnhem to support the advance into Germany.

Initially the existing aerodromes at Eindhoven and Volkel, which had been used by the Germans, were to be repaired and at least one strip made serviceable as soon as possible. It was with this object in mind that 12 AGRE regrouped in mid-September in the Bourg Leopold area.

12 AGRE consisted of rear headquarters at Diest with advanced headquarters at Bourg Leopold, 13 Airfield Construction Group (building airfields in the 12 Corps sector) and 16 Airfield Construction Wing, RAF, which was earmarked for Eindhoven. (Each group or wing was divided into two parts, echelons in the case of the RE groups and squadrons for the RAF wings, the latter made up of Royal Air Force personnel.)

Both Eindhoven and Volkel had been heavily bombed by the Allied air forces in their effort to ground the Luftwaffe and air photographs indicated that extensive crater filling would be necessary. The main problem, therefore, was to get the heavy equipment forward along the same road to be used by 30 Corps in their advance northward.

Eindhoven airfield March 3, 1945. Sergeant Mapham photographs Field-Marshal Montgomery escorting the Prime Minister Winston Churchill from his Dakota (IWM).

EINDHOVEN B78

The reconnaissance party of 5357 Airfield Construction Wing travelled well forward with the Guards Armoured Division and reached the airfield on September 19. The Germans had withdrawn to the woods west of the airfield and a platoon of the US 101st Airborne Division was on hand to provide some protection.

The recce party located a possible grass strip which only had twelve large craters to be filled; a job which would take about forty-eight hours. During the evening, Eindhoven was bombed by the Germans and ground forces threatened to infiltrate the aerodrome area. The US Airborne troops were withdrawn to the town, leaving the RAF Wing to mount their own local defence.

Next morning, with the leading troops of 12 Corps still ten to fifteen miles to the south-

west, 5357 Wing sent out small patrols while work continued on the airfield. Meanwhile 12 AGRE had obtained permission from 30 Corps to send sixty vehicles from Bourg Leopold northward during the night. They reached Eindhoven at 2.00 p.m. on the 20th.

However, the area was still not clear of German forces and the Wing had difficulty in loading tarmac from a dump which was in the beaten zone of a German machine gun. A 5357 Wing patrol was sent out which drove back the Germans taking three prisoners. During the afternoon, contact was made with the leading elements of 12 Corps west of the airfield and the next day, troops crossed the airfield and advanced beyond it.

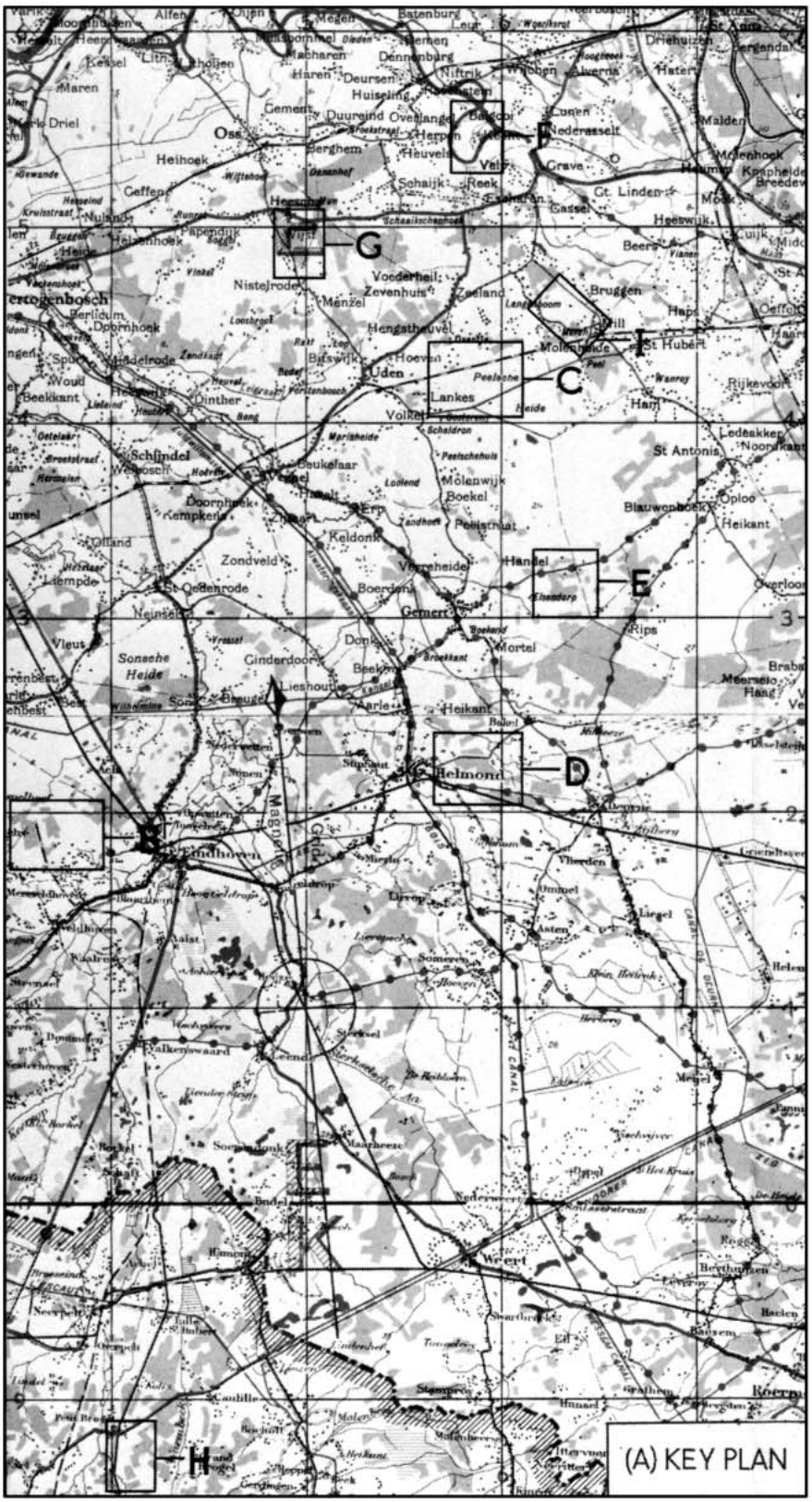
That same day, September 21, the grass strip was completed by midday and the following day, at 4.30 p.m., the first RAF aircraft landed on the aerodrome. It was realised that the grass strip would be serviceable only in the driest weather and 5357 Wing were fully employed throughout the winter repairing the permanent runways. The runways, taxi-tracks and hardstandings were refurbished partly by bricks and partly with concrete. The drainage of the field was largely relaid, although too late to be fully effective. In the thaw of February 1945, the taxi-tracks and roads began to break up and the aerodrome was only prevented from becoming completely unserviceable by superhuman efforts.

Eindhoven aerodrome was established as a small civil airfield in the 1930s and was the location for the testing of pre-war aircraft manufactured by Fokker such as the D-21 and G-1 fighters.

Immediately after the German occupation of Holland on May 15, 1940, the Luftwaffe took over Eindhoven and one of the units later using the airfield was KG2 with Dornier Do-217s.

As we have seen, the airfield was captured by the Allies in September 1944, and it was during its use by the Second Tactical Air Force that it suffered severe damage during Operation Bodenplatte — the German attack on Allied installations on New Year's Day 1945. Major damage was inflicted on the airfield buildings and the majority of Typhoons belonging to Squadrons, No. 438, 439 and 440 RCAF, were destroyed.

Eindhoven remained a joint RAF and RCAF base until May 1, 1952 when it became the second tactical airbase of the Royal Netherlands Air Force operating two squadrons of F-84E Thunderjet fighter-bombers. Since then, an additional parallel runway has been constructed as well as the extension of other facilities, being also used by the Dutch domestic airline NLM. Today No. 314 Squadron, RNAF, occupies the airfield equipped with NF-5 fighter-bombers.



VOLKEL B80

On September 19, the Guards Armoured Division continued to advance up the 30 Corps axis from Son to Grave. The recce party of 16 Airfield Construction Group left the main road at Uden and travelled in two armoured cars three miles east to Volkel aerodrome. They found the airfield extensively cratered and, whilst one vehicle returned to report, the other, the sole military occupants of Volkel, began organising civilian labour to begin clearing the field.

Although the Dutch stated there was a German battle group of two SS battalions and tanks only four miles away, work continued on repairing the runway. By September 21, over 200 Dutchmen, working under the reconnaissance officer, had cleared half the runway.

The Germans had, meanwhile, counter-attacked and cut the Eindhoven road near Veghel and 101st Airborne troops, intended to reinforce the garrison at Uden, were rushed to counter the attack. At 7.00 p.m. the following day, the 22nd, German tanks cut the road south of Uden but these were attacked by Typhoons operating from the new strip at Eindhoven.

Two battalions of the Guards Armoured Division returned from the north to counter-attack a reported fifteen German tanks in Volkel village which they cleared by 3.00 p.m. on September 23. At noon the following day, the 101st Airborne troops returned to Volkel and were able to provide the Royal Engineers Commander at the airfield with local protection. The Royal Engineers of 16 Group were at least able to start work although the airfield was still some distance north-east of the main Allied positions.

However on the next day, 25th, the Americans were again withdrawn and the patrolling and defence of the eastern half of Uden fell on 16 Group. Full protection for the airfield group was not provided until the arrival of 231 Infantry Brigade the following day.

A grass strip on the least damaged part of the field, parallel to and south of the NE-SW runway was made operational the same day

Volkel under water, December 1944 (IWM).

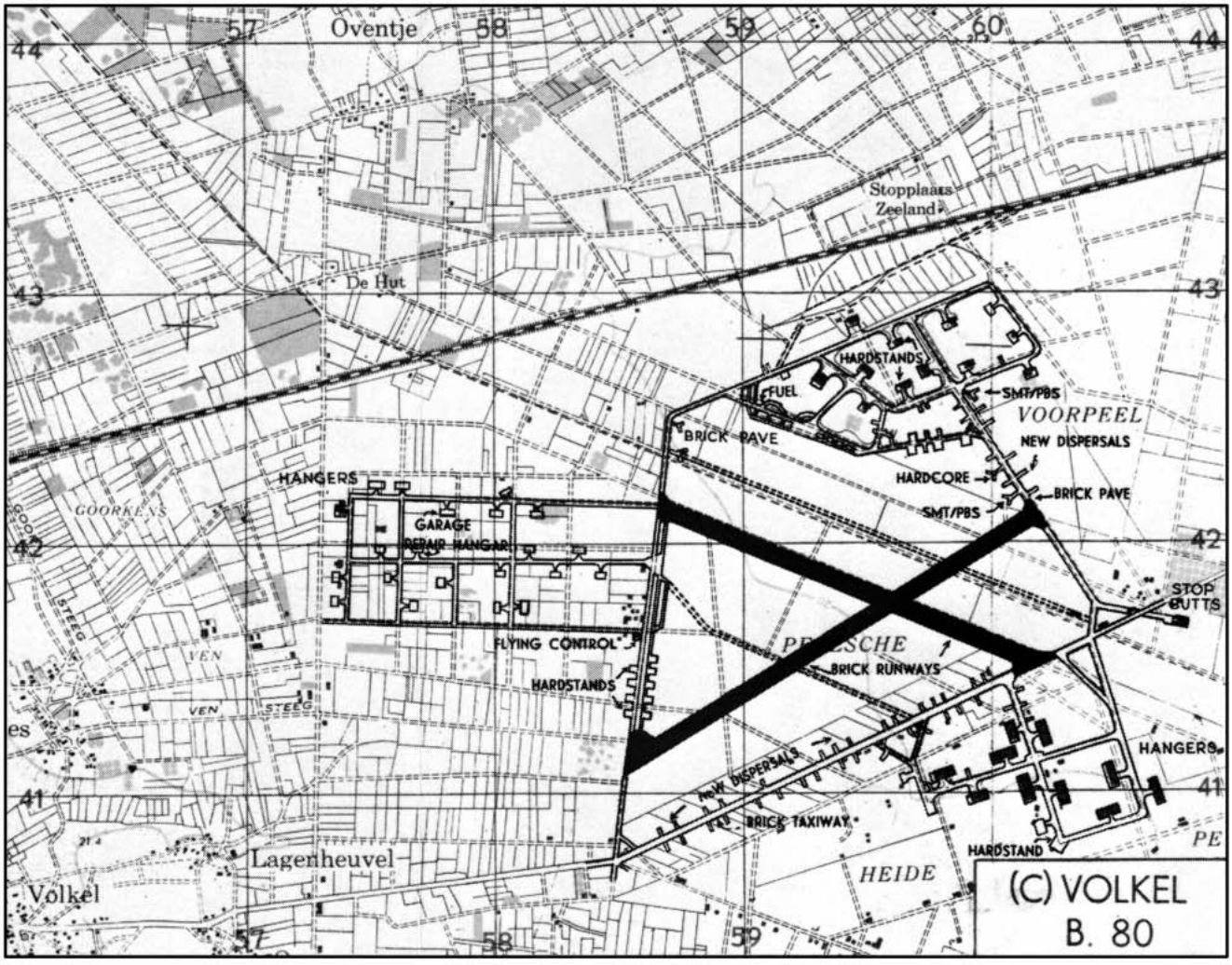
after the filling of fifteen craters and marking the strip and taxi-ways. Two days later the NE-SW runway itself was declared serviceable.

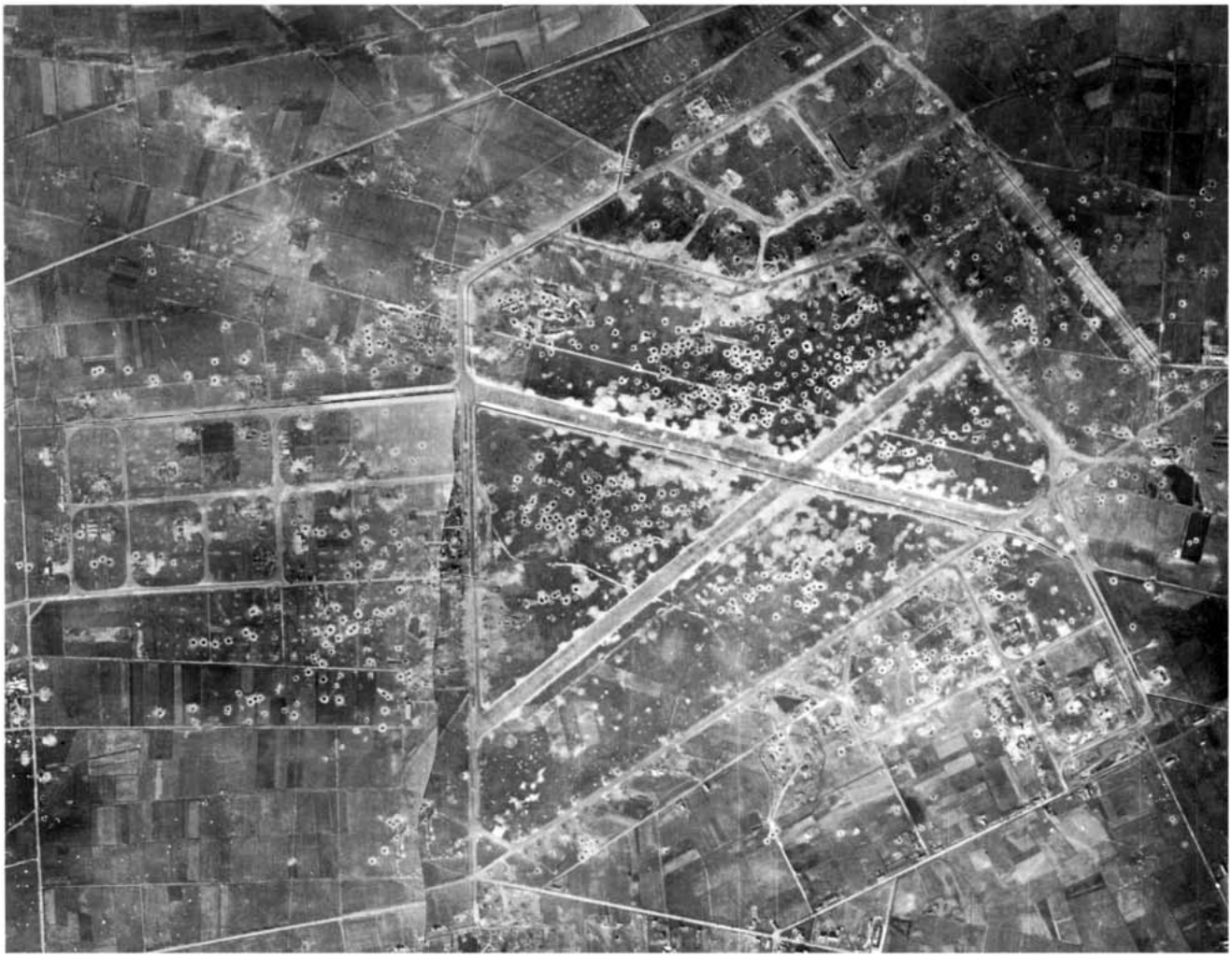
The Group then got down to working out a long term programme of repair. A local contractor was engaged to renew the drainage system for the entire airfield whilst 16 Group itself started to repair carefully and fully the other NW-SE runway with other parties working on the taxi-tracks and dispersals.

A number of local contractors were employed on the work and about 1,000 civilian labourers although the CRE 16 Group experienced a certain amount of difficulty with local politics. It seemed to the REs that two parties alternated in power and whichever party happened to be in power imprisoned the other as collaborators with the result that key civilians kept on disappearing.

RAF personnel were accommodated in wooden huts built on and near the airfield whilst 16 Group itself was billeted in Uden. As well as rebuilding both runways (one 2,200 yards the other 1,800 yards long), all the taxi-tracks were repaved and all hanger floors cleared for use as dispersals in addition to the preparation of nearly 200 hardstandings lining the taxi-ways. The hardstandings were made from a variety of materials: PSP (pierced steel plank), PBS (prefabricated bitumous surfacing), SMT (square mesh track), hardcore, concrete, paving stones and brick.

The airfield was occupied by three RAF Wings and work continued on improving Volkel right up until March 1945.





Above: **An RAF photo of Volkel aerodrome taken on March 15, 1945 (Crown Copyright via Keele University).**

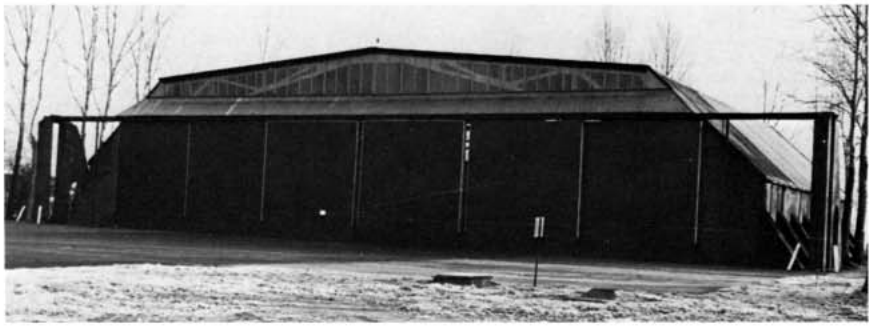
Volkel airfield was established by the Luftwaffe during the first half of WWII, during which time they constructed two of the three planned runways.

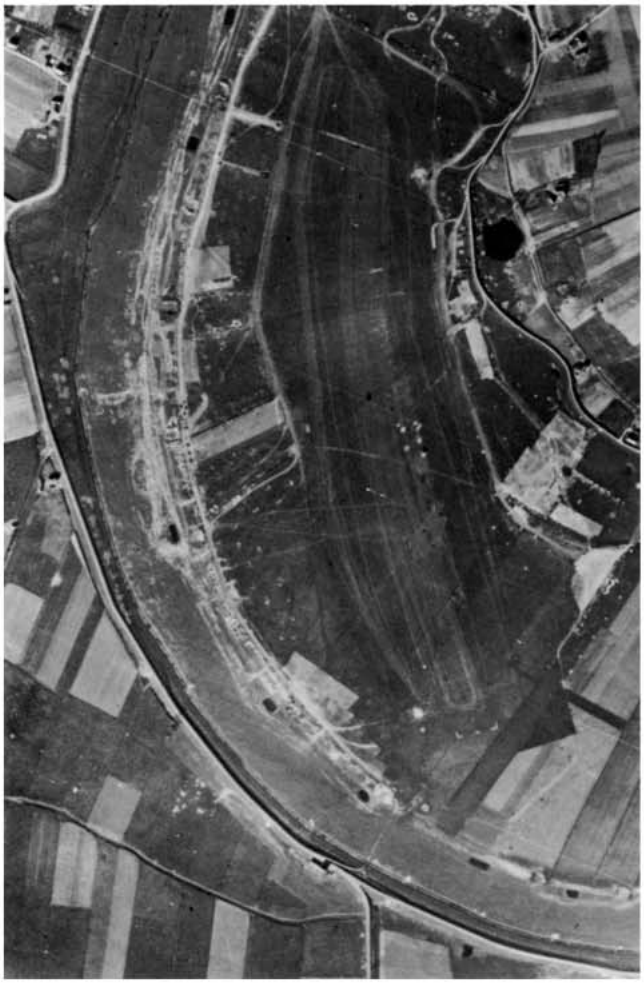
The last Allied squadrons to use the aerodrome during the war were No. 4, 305 (Polish), 418 (RCAF) and 605, all operating with Mosquitos. In 1946 the base was handed over to the Royal Netherlands Marines, subsequently being transferred to the RNAF on May 31, 1951.

The SW-NE runway was extended post-war to the north-east together with the addition of a parallel runway. The old, wide German brick runway (NW-SE) has now been narrowed and is only used as a flight line and taxi-track. The complex on the northern and southern sides of the airfield, partly-demolished during the war, were not rebuilt and all but one of the once numerous German hangers have now disappeared. Only one other German construction remains and that building is currently used for living accommodation. Today, the RNAF use the western hanger area and additional concrete aircraft dispersal shelters have been built all around the airfield. Three Dutch F-104G Starfighter squadrons, Nos. 311, 312 and 306 (the latter equipped with the photo reconnaissance version of the Starfighter, the RF-104G), currently operate from Volkel and, because of its strategic importance, no photographs of the airfield today could be obtained.

Above: **No. 16 Airfield Construction Group laying a perimeter track at Volkel, 1944 (IWM).**

Right: **The old German hanger remaining at Volkel. Now called No. 1 Hanger.**





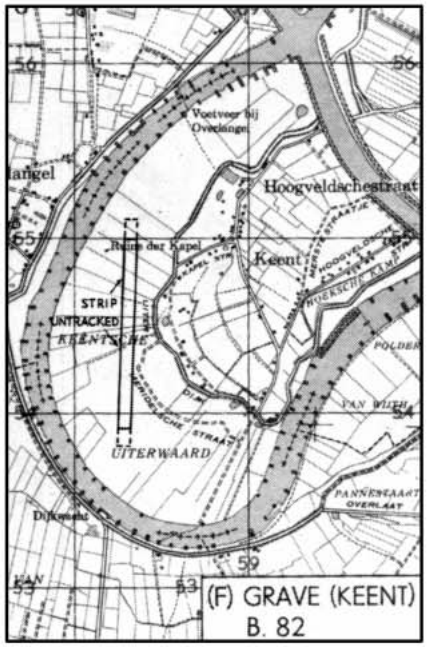
Above left: **Grave strip March 21, 1945 and** *(above)* **courtesy of the Royal Netherlands AF on June 29, 1976.**

By the end of September 1944, when it was apparant that Operation Market Garden had not been entirely successful, HQ 12 AGRE (now based in Eindhoven) realised they would have to make plans for the winter. Flat, low-lying Holland was notoriously damp and it was apparent that 83 Group RAF would not only want airfields but all-weather ones. Eindhoven and Volkel provided the first pair, and two other temporary fields had also been found, both used as advanced landing grounds by the Germans.

GRAVE B82

This small grass strip in a bend in the River Maas had been used by the Germans in a small way during the summer and was suitable for one Wing in dry weather. SMT was laid as a temporary expediant but, as the rains increased during October, it disappeared several times under the floods. When it was decided to abandon the strip, the RAF had the greatest difficulty in flying out the Spitfire Wing.

The Maas at Keent has now been diverted and the bend, which during the war formed a large oxbow lake, is now under cultivation. A good view of the area can be gained from the bund road which, as the comparison aerial photographs show, now runs roughly parallel to the line of the original strip. Nothing remains now to indicate its former use.



Today even the loop of the river Maas has been filled in leaving only a small drainage channel. Photograph taken looking north-east from the bund road.

DE RIPS B84

The other German grass strip at De Rips was suitable for one RAF Wing. This was also tracked with SMT but became inundated like Grave in the October rains. By referring to the map and the modern aerial photograph (all of which were kindly taken from 6,000 feet for us by the Dutch Air Force in 1976) it is possible to see precisely where the strip was located.

By now, it was clear to all concerned that more fields would have to be built quickly and ones which were impervious to the Dutch weather. Pierced steel planking seemed the best solution but this was in very short supply. A request for supplies to 21 Army Group was turned down in that 'there are very few trains and almost no PSP in the dumps; one of the ships had just gone aground in a gale, and we do not see how we can let you have PSP in any quantity for several weeks'.

Consequently 12 AGRE called a conference and as a result, decided on the following policy:

(*a*) To repair VOLKEL and EINDHOVEN airfields as quickly as possible on an all-weather basis to take two wings each. This was already well under way.

(*b*) To make a new PSP airfield at HEESCH, with what PSP was available, to take one wing.

(*c*) To build a new field at HELMOND, in brick, to take one wing. Brick was the local material used for roads and airfields, and Dutch labour could be got to lay the bricks.

(*d*) Later, to build another PSP field, when PSP was available. This was eventually at PETIT BROGEL for two wings.

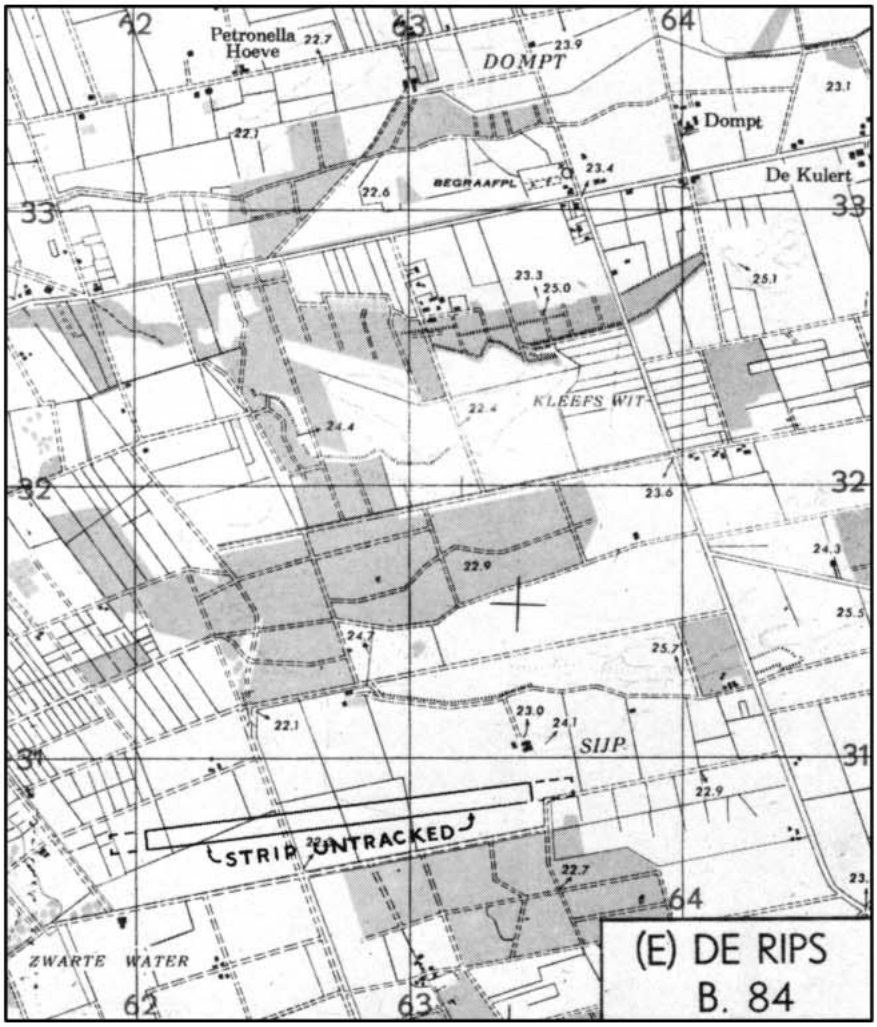
Tasks were allotted as follows:

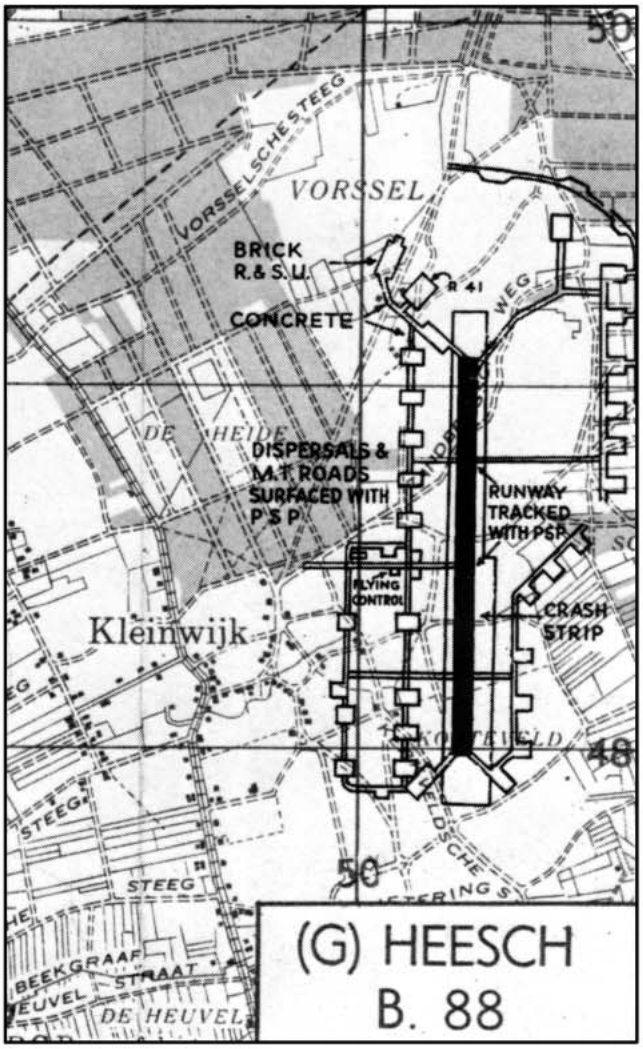
13 *Airfield Construction Group:* HELMOND,

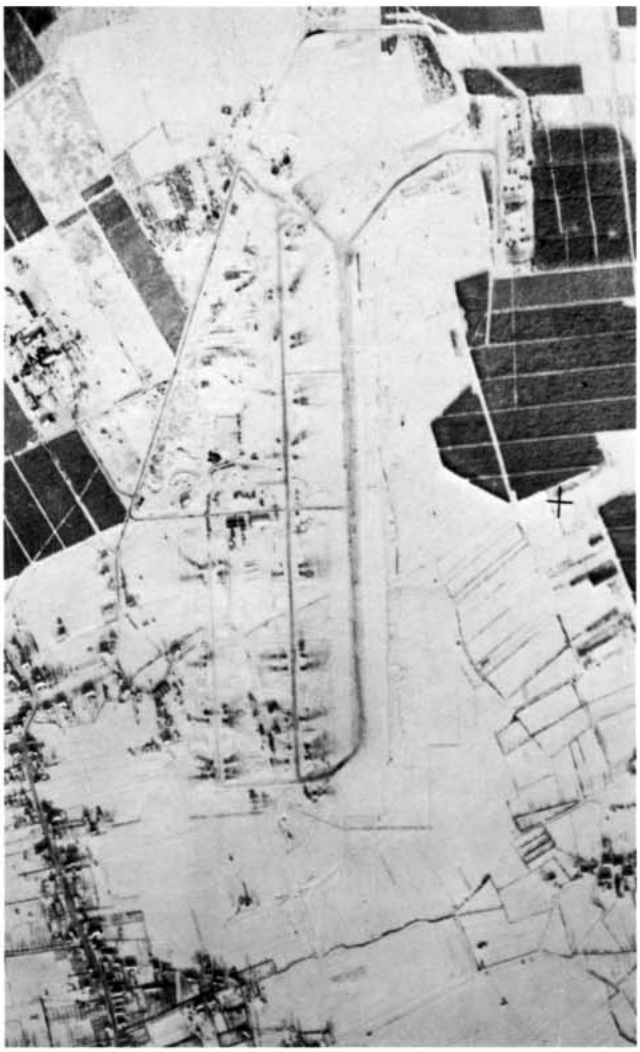
16 *Airfield Construction Group*: VOLKEL, HEESCH and later PETIT BROGEL,

5357 *Airfield Construction Wing*: EINDHOVEN and part of HEESCH.

The programme of work was started at once.







HEESCH B88

The airstrip at Heesch was to be created on a virgin site and would involve heavy earthwork and drainage. The work was carried out by 16 Airfield Construction Group with help from 5357 Wing. Six to nine inches of sand was brought in from outside to form a base for the PSP. Huts for accommodation were put up by local contractors. In the early stages, the local bread supply was seriously interrupted when a Dutch contractor was ordered to remove the sails from Mynheer Johnker's windmill which would obstruct the flying approach. It turned out, however, that the local millers were all closely related and had the same surname, with the result that the sails were removed from more mills than necessary!

Work started in late October and the airstrip was completed by the end of November. The airfield accommodated one wing until March 1945.

When we visited Heesch on our tour of Dutch airfields, PSP was evident on several farms in the area being used for fencing etc., obviously from that left over when the tracking was removed after the war. The line of the runway was still evident in 1949 but today, although we had the accurate map (reproduced here), it was difficult to pinpoint the exact position of the PSP runway as the land has all been returned to cultivation.

Photographs of Heesch by the Royal Air Force, *(above right)* **snow covered on January 20, 1945 (Crown Copyright via Keele University) and** *(right)* **by the Royal Netherlands Air Force for us in June 1976.**

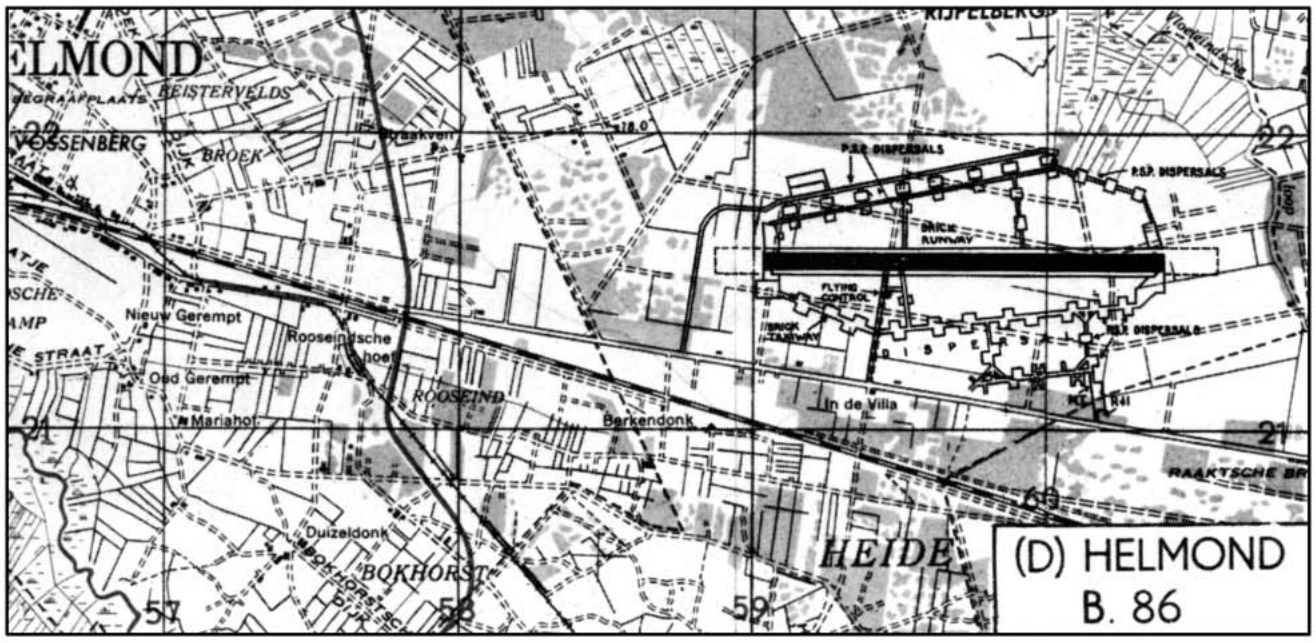
Above: **The best control tower in the west! This Dutch farmhouse was converted into the flying control office, see map below (Charles E. Brown).** *Below:* **The building was re-roofed in 1947 and we could find nothing in the upper storey to indicate its former use.**

HELMOND B86

In October 1944, the site for the Helmond strip had been found by a 13 Group recce party; it was then simply agricultural ground intersected by a number of tracks and open ditches. It was decided to build an all-weather, single-strip using Dutch bricks with dispersals initially for one wing of 54 aircraft on the south side to be followed by dispersals for a second wing to the north.

In all, fourteen million bricks were used to pave the field and brickyards were combed for miles around for supplies. Bricks were brought to the dump by every available method including transporters which carried 8,000 bricks per load.

After five million or so had been collected, the supply ran out. None were being made in Holland as there was no coal so fuel had to be fetched from the mines in Belgium to reactivate a dozen brickworks. A large number of paving bricks were also taken from remote dispersals on Eindhoven airfield. Finally, the hardstandings and northern taxi-tracks at Helmond had to be completed with PSP which



Above: **Surely that can't be the same crane! It was a surprising discovery to find one almost on the same spot thirty-odd years later. Photo on the left shows the typically Dutch-style herring-bone brick pattern being laid down for the runway. We found several bricks scattering the fields, although all of the runway and the perimeter tracks have now been lifted to return the land to agriculture.**

became plentiful in 1945. A decauville narrow-gauge railway was laid on the field for distributing the bricks from the dump.

The work of grading and drainage went on throughout the winter. The weather was frequently appalling and large areas of soft ground had to be dug out to a depth of five feet or so and refilled with hardcore. Six inches of sand was spread on the graded surface and civilian experts laid and tamped the bricks on this base. All the taxi-ways had concrete curbs, manufactured on site.

The flying control building was converted from a barn which was altered and provided with a balcony by 13 Group. The strip itself measured 45 yards wide by 1,500 yards long with 200 yard overruns at each end constructed of PSP laid on straw.

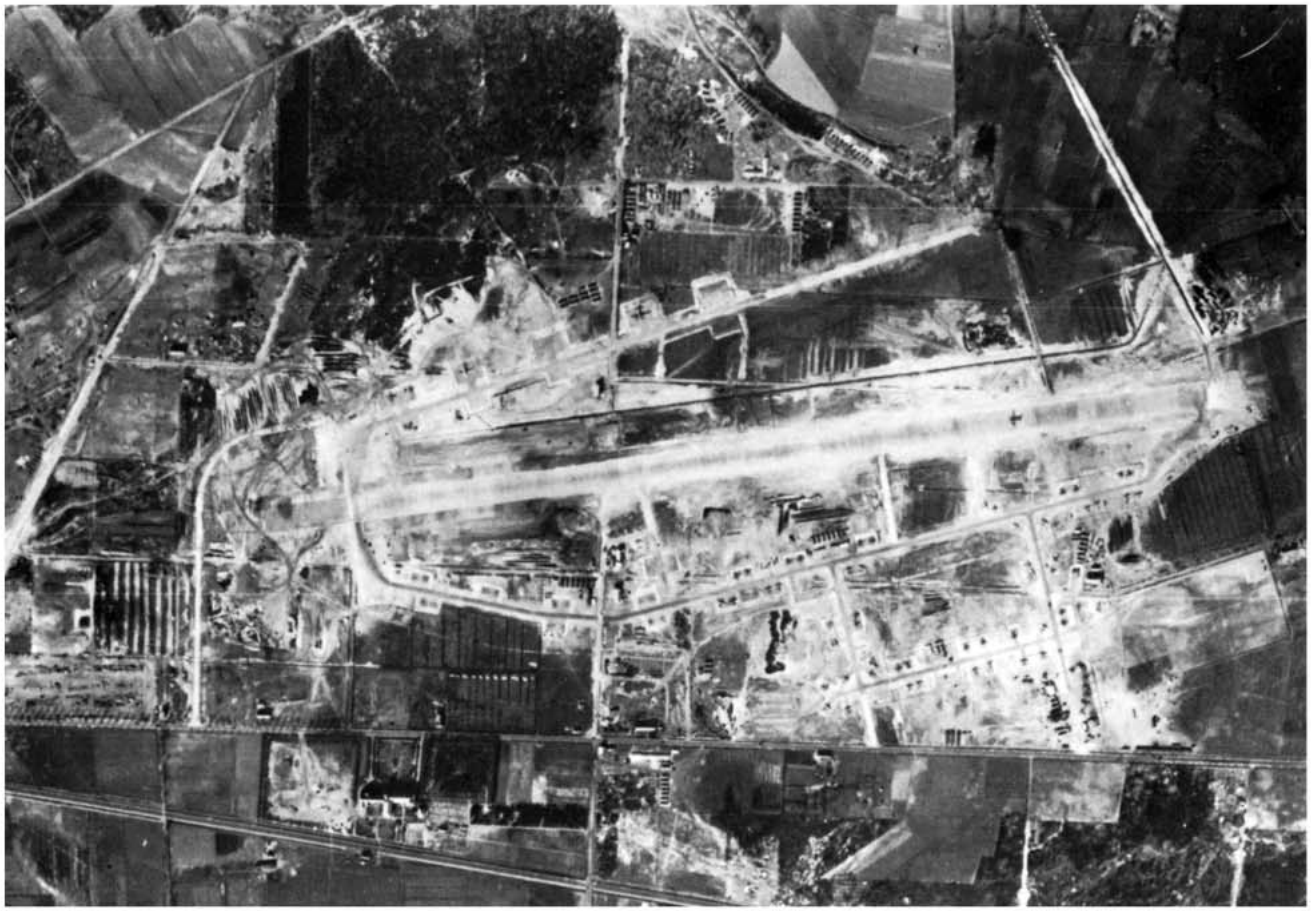
The airfield construction personnel were accommodated in factories and schools in Helmond, one company occupying the nearby monastery. A hutted camp was built by contractors for RAF personnel in the woods to the north.

The southern half of the field was completed for one Wing by January 13. 1945, which was occupied by Typhoons joined by a second Wing the following month. It had been finished just in time for the Reichwald battles and, due to the extensive consideration given to drainage (one ditch was a mile long), the field stood up to the February thaw and remained operational throughout this period.

Helmond was the most interesting airfield site we visited as we possessed an excellent set of photographs taken of its construction by Charles E. Brown, the renowned aviation photographer. The airfield had become the 'piece de resistance' of 13 Group and had been successfully completed against every difficulty — weather, lack of suitable labour, lack of bricks and fuel to make more, and transport to shift them when they had been made and so on. Even when the brickworks had been reactivated and bricks were flowing, the Royal Engineers then had to ensure that nobody else pinched them!

Although the runway has now been removed, odd bricks still lie in the fields and we were excited to find the control tower still standing although with the large window removed and converted back to a barn.

Above: **The decauville railway laid down to transport the millions of bricks required to pave the runway and dispersals.** *Below:* **Casting the concrete curb stones for the taxi-ways.** *Bottom:* **Dutch labourers tamping the bricks (All photos Charles E. Brown).**



Above: **The completed airfield at Helmond photographed on March 15, 1945 (Crown Copyright via Keele University).**

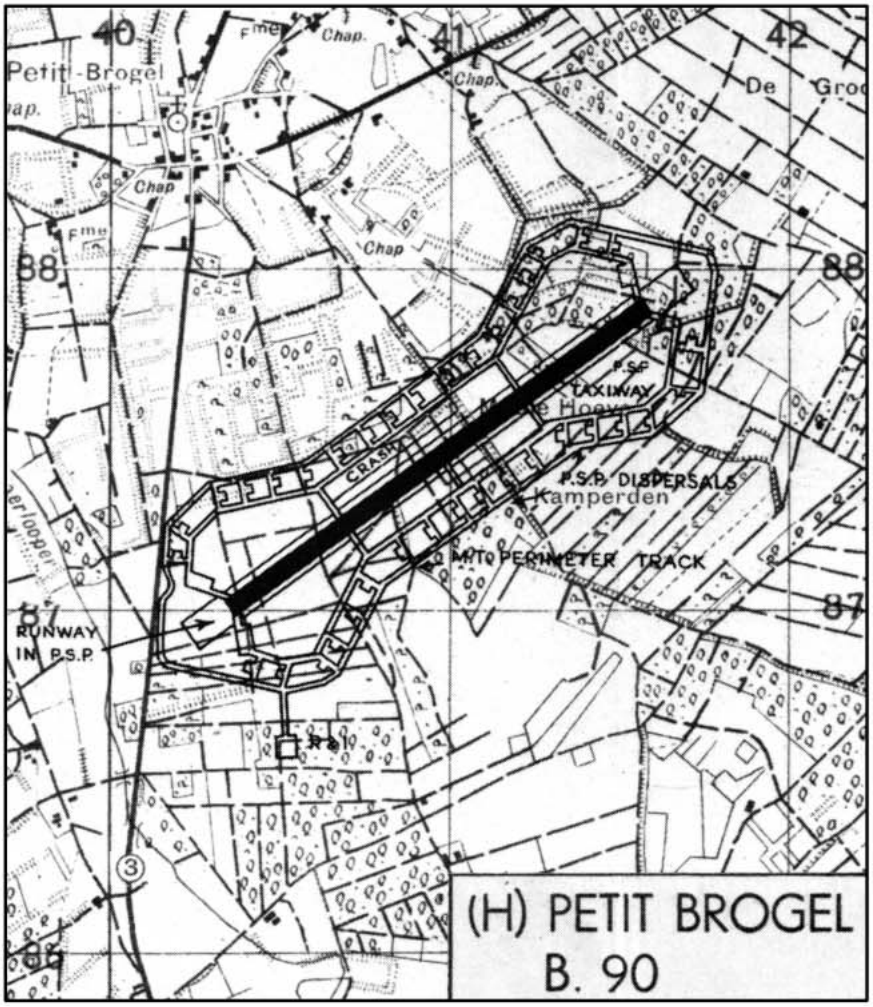
Below: **The same area to the east of Helmond shows little trace of the aerodrome outline in June 1976 (Royal Netherlands AF).**

PETIT BROGEL B90

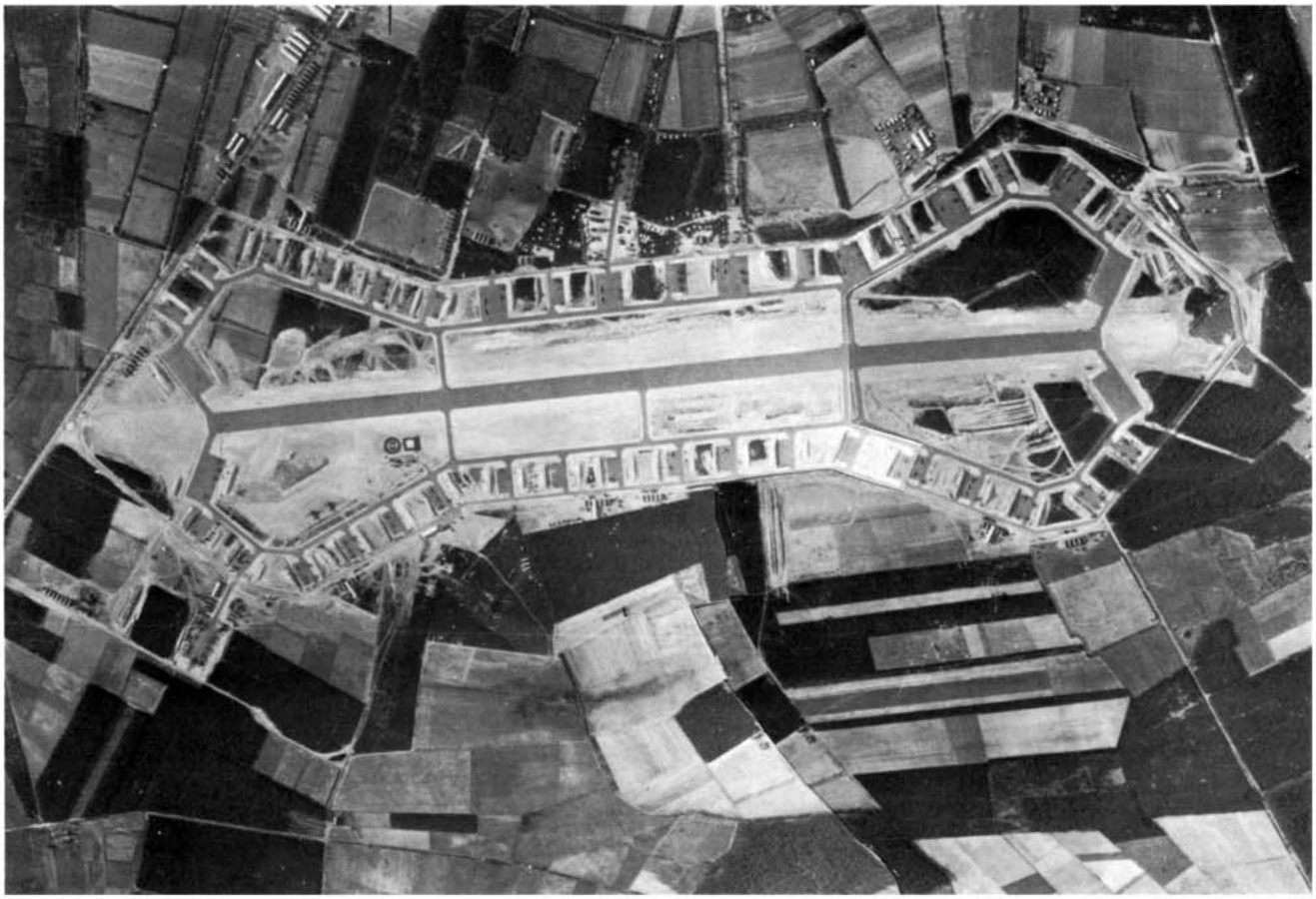
This was a PSP field built by 16 Group at the end of the winter. PSP was, by this time, in good supply and the site was very carefully chosen on gravel soil to avoid the difficulties of drainage which had been met at Heesch and Helmond. Its construction was a model of good organization — it was completed in less than a month and became operational for two Wings on March 2, 1945.

Petit Brogel, is, in fact in Belgium, just five miles over the frontier. The 10th Wing of the Belgian Air Force had been formed with Spitfires on November 29, 1951 and an advance party moved into Kleine Brogel (as it is called in Flemish) in 1953 in preparation for its re-equipment with F-84G Thunderjets. As two years reconstruction would be necessary to replace the old PSP strip with concrete to handle jets, the three squadrons operated in the meantime from Geilenkirchen, Germany. In February 1955, the 10th Jager Bommenwerpers Wing returned to take up residence at Kleine Brogel — the Thunderjets being replaced by F-84F Thunderstreaks in 1956.

In April 1964, the first F-104G Starfighter arrived and today these aircraft are operated from the airfield by Nos. 23 and 31 fighter-bomber squadrons of the BAF. Being a front-line NATO airfield, Kleine Brogel was chosen as the location for the first American military unit with a combat mission assigned to Belgium since the end of the Second World War. The American unit arrived in July 1962 and, currently, a hundred personnel of the 7361st Munitions Support Squadron of the USAF Europe receive, store and maintain munitions on the base. Being an operational NATO base, no present day photographs could be supplied to us.



Below: **This was how Petit Brogel looked on March 22, 1945 (Crown Copyright via Keele University). Unfortunately a modern aerial picture could not be supplied to us because of NATO security.**



Above left: **Hundreds of fighters can be seen on this RAF photograph of Mill taken on March 21, 1945 and** *(above right)* **by the RNAF almost obliterated by gravel excavation.**

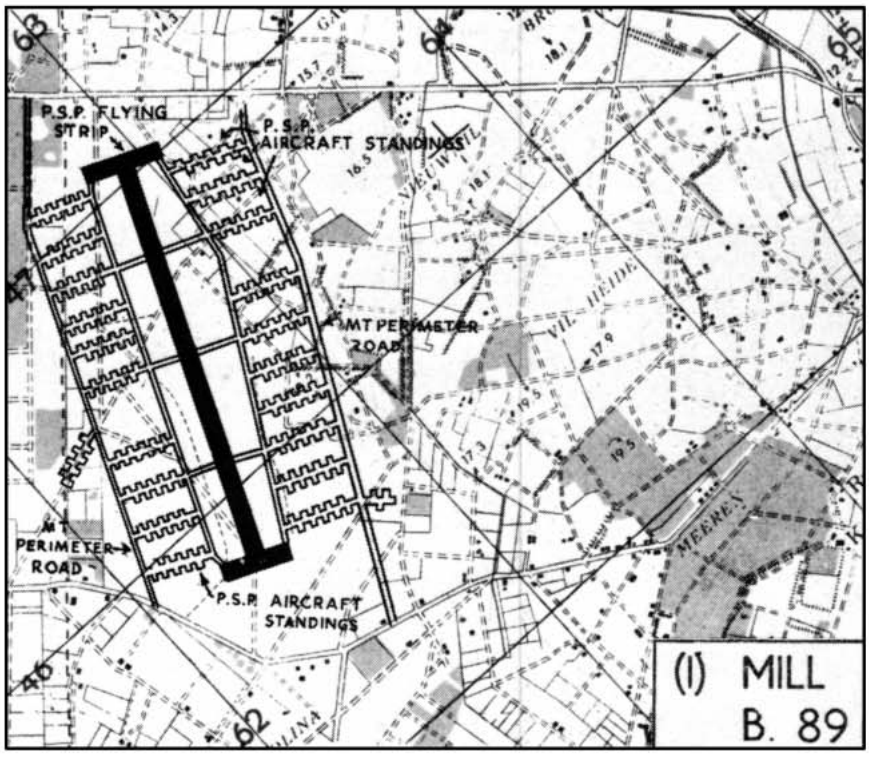
MILL B89

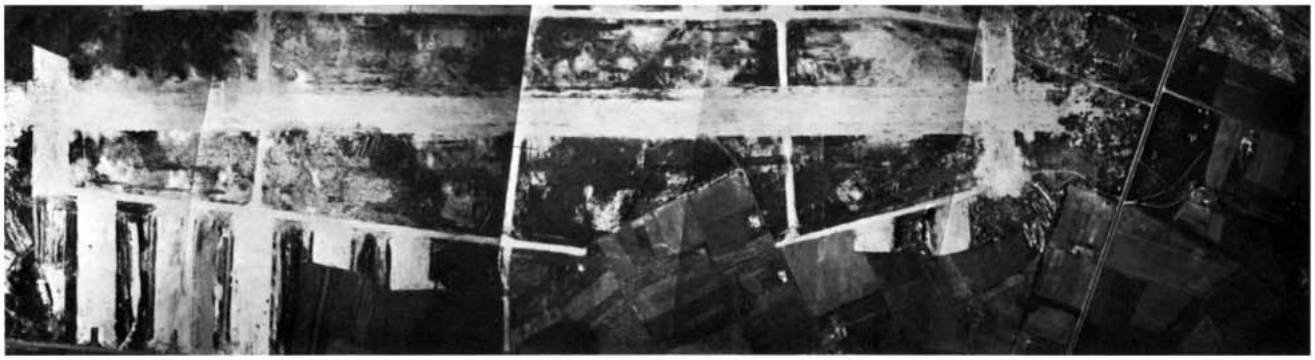
Finally, we conclude this feature on airfield construction in Holland with a personal account of the construction of the airfield at Mill by Lieutenant-Colonel G. C. Clark, OBE, who was Commander Royal Engineers of 25 Airfield Construction Group in 1944.

'On about December 10, orders were received to reconnoitre and plan an airfield in the general area west of Grave. The airfield was to be of a permanent type, to accommodate two wings of fighter aircraft, and it was understood that it would be required for operational use in March 1945.

'In view of these considerations, it was appreciated that time spent in detailed reconnaissance and planning would not be wasted. An admirable site was soon found on an expanse of heathland about one mile west of the village of Mill and detailed planning and organization of the work was started. Apparently this forethought was not appreciated, however, by the "Powers that Be". To their minds, unless bulldozers were actually engaged in churning up the soil nothing was being done. "Rockets" started flying. We had, however, got things in hand and the field was practically set out, levels taken, earthwork calculated and tasks allotted by December 19 when half the group (681 and 217 Coys) started to deploy on the ground, having moved up from Ghent.

'We were now informed that, far from being required in March, the field must be ready for use at the beginning of February by one fighter wing of five squadrons. Furthermore, provision had to be made for





Deterioration is already evident to the airfield in this picture taken in 1949.

housing the RAF personnel involved. These requirements presented a very different picture from our original instructions. The field was sited in an area devoid of much habitation and we were therefore faced with the construction, by the beginning of February, of a hutted camp, complete with all the amenities required by the RAF. Furthermore, the construction of the field itself, with all its permanent service roads, was a vast project in the time available.

'By January 1, 1945, 681 Rd Constr Coy, 217 Coy Pnr Corps, an extra Pioneer Corps company and a detachment from 23 Airfield Construction Group were concentrated on the site. The field company of 50 GHQ Tps Engrs was already living in Mill. Group headquarters concentrated first at Gemert and later moved to Veghel.

'On January 1, the first sod was turned and the bulldozers were let loose. It had been decided to adopt a new layout for this field, a layout which found such favour with the RAF, on account of its operational simplicity, that it was adopted later on other fields. The general plan was based on a central flying strip with one RAF wing on each side. Taxi-tracks, reserved entirely for the use of aircraft, ran parallel to the strip and, from these, the aircraft standings (two for each squadron) led off at right-angles. At the far end of these standings, and parallel to the strip, ran the perimeter road for use by MT. These roads connected at each end with existing permanent roads which ran east and west at the north and south ends of the strip (the general direction of which was NE to SW. It was thus possible for MT to circuit the field or to service planes without getting involved with any aircraft traffic.

'When reconnoitring the site, it was found that under the top surface of peaty soil there was an excellent base of sandy gravel. To provide an all-weather field, it was therefore decided that this top surface of peat (averaging about 2 feet in depth) should be scraped clear and that PSP should be laid direct on to the sandy sub-soil on the strip, taxi-tracks and aircraft standings. In order to dispose of this soil, it was decided to dump it between each "half-squadron" aircraft dispersal area. These mounds afforded excellent protection to aircraft in the event of any regrettable incidents.

'In the absence of records, it is hard to give a detailed account of the work, of the plant involved and of the quantities of earth shifted. As far as I remember, something like 400,000 cubic yards of earth were moved and the maximum number of tractors and scrapers deployed on any one day was 28. They made a formidable array and, of course, there were other side-lines in the way of auto-patrols (a modest half-dozen or so), rollers and RB 10s also engaged on the work.

'During the whole of January, the weather was as bad as it could possibly have been. Snow, sleet and frost were continous and only one sunny afternoon was recorded on the work. Right from the beginning we had been pressed to give an estimate for the date of completion of the field for one wing and, early in January, we gave a tentative guess as February 7. As time went on this date became more and more of a fixed obsession in the minds of the "Powers that Be" and, equally so, a nebulous hope in our dreams. But we gradually found that the 7th was an absolute red-hot finality. The field had to be done by then! Later on we realized why this was so.

'The weather kept on being vile and the strip became a frozen mass of sand and snow. In many cases, before scrapers could operate, the ground had to be broken up first by rooters, which tore up big chunks of peat frozen solid to a depth of 18 inches and more. Consolidation and grading was almost impossible. As time went on and the fatal date, February 7, approached, it became obvious that we should, if we were to have a permanent surface functioning, have to lay the PSP on this base of frozen sand and snow. It was impossible to foretell what this base would develop into when the thaw came, but we had to do something and so we started laying.

'And then, on January 30, the thaw came, and with it the concentration of troops for the Reichswald battle and the complete disintegration of the roads. Immediately all stone deliveries to the field were diverted to road repairs and we were given the task of maintaining some eight miles of road in addition to our existing task of completing the airfield by the 7th. This road maintenance task was allotted to 64 Rd Constr Coy who had, during the latter half of January, moved up to that part of the field required for the second RAF wing.

'The strip and half the field was completed by the evening of February 7, together with sufficient huts to accommodate the personnel of one wing, and, on the morning of February 8, after they had completed their first sortie of the day in the opening phase of the Reichswald battle, a Typhoon wing flew in and took up residence. Next day they flew their record number of sorties in any one day of the campaign.

'With the arrival of that wing, our troubles did not end, for we had now, with equal urgency, to complete the camp and aircraft standings for the second wing — 35 Army Co-operation and Photographic Reconnaissance Wing. Long before this, we had lost the help of 50 GHQ Tps Engrs, who had been given other work connected with the Reichswald battle. However, we managed to acquire some Dutch civilian carpenters who gave most valuable help. 35 Wing moved up on about March 7, with their arrival, one could regard the field as completely operational.

'The end of that airfield came soon after the crossing of the Rhine, for we moved on to fields elsewhere and the RAF wings went too. I do not think it was ever used again. It was a good field and it is interesting to note that, in spite of laying the PSP on the frozen sand, the track bedded down beautifully and gave no trouble at all.

After having read Lieutenant-Colonel Clark's account of the construction at Mill, we were especially looking forward to visiting the site. Alas when we reached the location, we found that a large reservoir has now been created by the excavation of gravel. This work was still proceeding when we drove round the area. Just at one end, the hardstandings were still visible and these can be seen clearly in the aerial photograph.

We are indebted to Luitenant-Kolonel A. P. De Jong of the Dutch Luchtmacht-Voorlichtingsdienst for very kindly arranging to have the modern aerial photographs reproduced here taken for us of the airfields and to the Royal Engineers whose maps are included in this article.

Looking down what little remains of the north-west perimeter track, the runway itself having been completely obliterated.

SCRAPYARD PANTHER

Above: **The Panther V Model G as first discovered by Eddie Kenten (*below* pointing out small-arms hits on the turret) in the scrapyard of J. W. Hardwick & Son Ltd in Cocks Lane, West Ewell, Surrey.**

For many years, a rumour has persisted in vehicle preservation circles that a Panther tank still existed in a scrapyard somewhere in the south of England, thirty-odd years after the end of the war. The editor had heard the story from several sources and it was therefore with great excitement that we received a telephone call one day in October 1977 from combat vehicle enthusiast Eddie Kenten to say that he had found it. He explained that he had also heard of the existence of a 'Tiger Tank' way back in the 1960s but it was not until the middle of 1977 that Bernie Foggan, a Watford gun repairer, located it while searching for vehicle parts in various scrapyards. All that was visible under a mound of rusting iron was the rear of a tank, but the sloping back was unmistakable as being that of a Panther.

Eddie, who already has upwards of twenty German vehicles, only heard about it some weeks later and, although he proceeded hot-foot to the Ewell-Epsom district of Surrey, it took him a day to track down the actual scrapyard concerned. Although a detailed examination of the Panther under twenty feet of scrap was not possible, he realised the historic significance of his find and purchased it there and then. However a 44-ton armoured vehicle is no easy thing to transport or refurbish without skilled assistance and even a suitable concrete-floored workshop, large enough to take the tank, was difficult for Eddie to arrange.

It was during a subsequent trip to Germany that he showed photographs of the tank to a German friend at Kiel, Klaus Flick. Herr Flick it seems has had a lifelong ambition to own his personal Panther, even going as far as building a suitable pen to cage his animal when one was found. More important he had the available cash to spend on expert restoration (which was believed would exceed £10,000 and take two years) and his own tame ex-Wehrmacht Panther engineer standing by in Solingen.

As a result a deal was made and it was early on the morning of the Panther's departure for Germany that we arrived at the scrapyard of J. W. Hardwick & Son Ltd. in Cocks Lane, West Ewell, Surrey. The Panther had already been dragged into the central compound and a double score-mark wound back around mounds of scrap to the spot where the Panther had lain since the 1950s when Mr. Hardwick Senior bought it at an ex-WD sale. The tank was minus three sprocket wheels and one track and the gun barrel had been cut short although the missing piece was recovered from the evil-smelling, water-filled pit left by the emerging monster.

Pickfords heavy haulage had laid on a suitable orange and blue transporter for the trip to Germany via the Hook of Holland and,

Above: **The beast has been dragged from its lair** *(photo right)* **where it had lain for over twenty years. The other tank is a Centurion.**

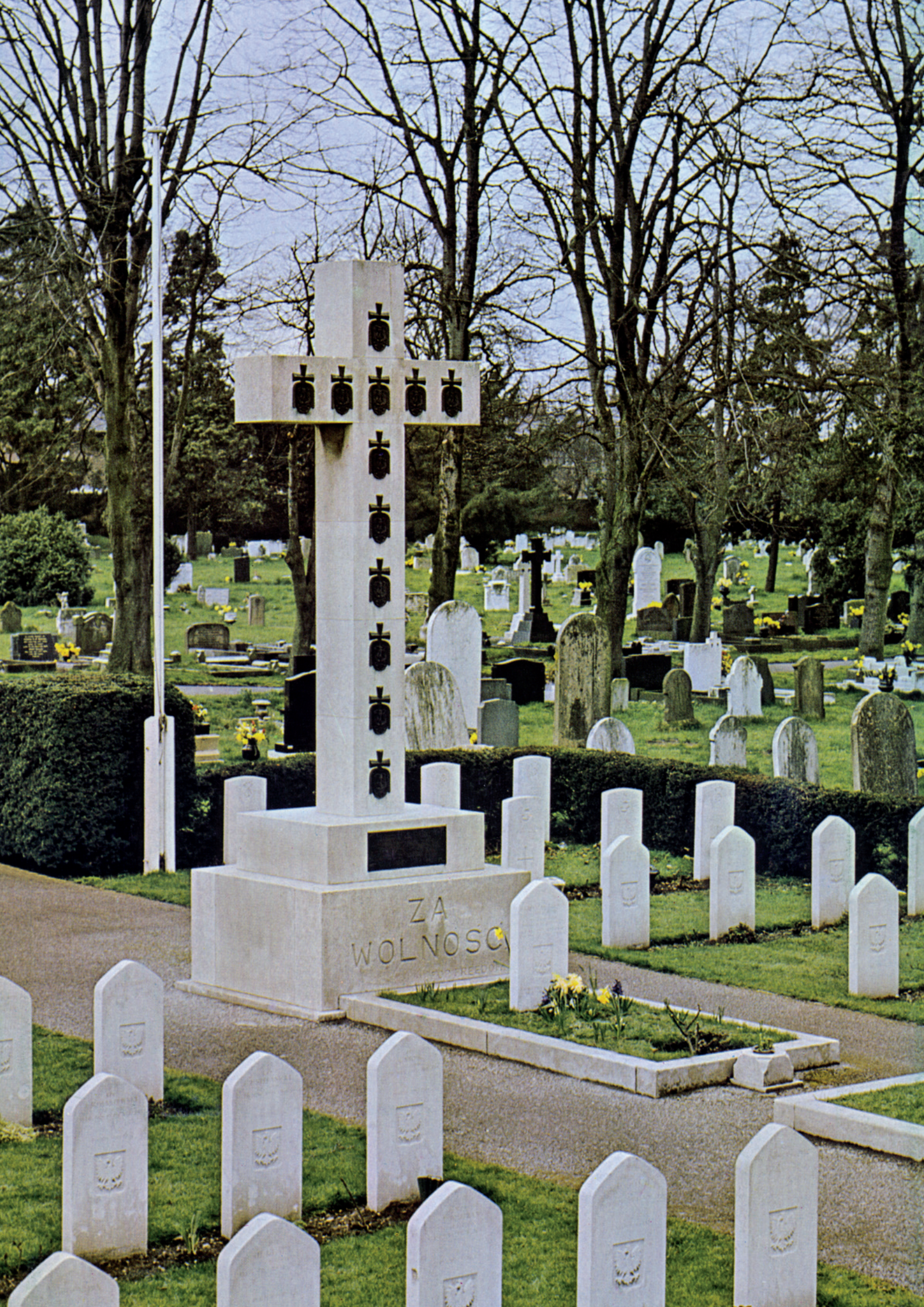
Above: **Evidence of the tank's British Army history still visible on the rear plate.** *Right:* **An attempt by Mr. Hardwick to cut the Panther up gives a good indication of the thickness of the side armour.**

promptly at 10.00 a.m., George and Jack Hardwick emerged from the site office to begin the loading operation, performed to the accompaniment of the clicking and whirring of several cameras. Lorries were shunted and cranes moved into position, from the cabs of which suitable instructions were issued to those helping. A platform of ubiquitous railway sleepers was constructed, piece by piece, as the rear of the Panther was lifted to the height of the transporter. Then, precariously balanced on the pile of wood, the front of the tank was raised to enable the lorry to be backed underneath. Within two hours, in a remarkably smooth operation, the Panther was in position for its 500-mile journey to the Fatherland.

The provenance of the Panther is somewhat of a mystery as it had an engraved plate affixed to it which read 'Built in Armoured Troop Works, REME No. 4 BOAR 1945'. Subsequent research has revealed that the unit began its life on January 1, 1943 with the name of 10 Tank Brigade Workshop Company, being re-designated 8 Tank Troops Workshop on February 3, 1944. On March 21, 1945 another name change was carried out to 823 Tank Troops Workshop, its final title being Armoured Troop Workshop.

Having moved to Germany on April 15, 1945, the Armoured Troop Workshop had reached Hanover on June 8 and occupied the Hanomag factory. The following month, it had moved to the 88mm Eisenwerke gun factory at Laatzen, south of Hanover. It was during the time that Major Harry France was commanding officer that instructions had been given for the assembly of ten Panther Vs, (Model G with the 75mm KwK42 L/70 gun) using German civilian labour, a job which was carried out in October 1945. Major France died in November 1975 and we have been unable to confirm the reason for the Panther assembly by REME unless this was for evaluation purposes. Subsequently at least one of the Panthers found its way to England, its possible use as a training or instructional machine being confined by the still-visible lettering on the rear stating 'T/WING 11'.

Above: **The loading operation underway and** *(below)* **arrival in Solingen, Germany.**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